PROPHETIC PREACHING: CHALLENGING THE MEMBERSHIP OF MHMBC TO TRANSFORM COMMUNITY HOPELESSNESS TO HOPE AND BEYOND

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ABSTRACT

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This project is designed to instill biblical principles and practices to the members at MHMBC that address hopelessness within the Auburn Gresham community. This research will challenge the membership of MHMBC to embrace a theology of hope. The researcher intends to preach a series of sermons from the Old and New Testament that addresses hope for the purpose of arousing congregational community involvement to counter community hopelessness. A quantitative pretest and post-test questionnaire will document the project effectiveness in addition to four community projects. Field interviews will be executed within the community applying the qualitative method to determine project effectiveness.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sincere appreciation, love and respect are given to my wife, Dr. Jacqueline Marie Moses for providing loving support, honest feedback and ongoing encouragement.

Special appreciation and gratitude goes to the entire membership of The Mount Hermon Missionary Baptist Church for their patience and willingness to participate in this three-year process.

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For availing this opportunity, appreciation is given to President Wendy Deichmann, Dr. Harold Hudson and all the staff of The United Theological Seminary.

Finally, above all, praise to God for His Sovereign Existence, Love, Promises, Providence and Challenge to the Church.

DEDICATION

This Doctor of Ministry Project is dedicated to the sainted memory of my maternal grandparents, Reverend Joseph A. Allen and Dorothy Webb Allen and paternal grandparents, O. T. Moses and Bobbie Lou Moses for their spiritual investments.

Additionally, this work is dedicated to my parents, the late Deacon Oscar Moses and Rosetta Moses-Hill for providing unconditional love and a strong Christian foundation that has anchored the faith tenets within the writer's heart. This work is dedicated to the late R' Lillian Gladney for her unselfish love and sacrificial living.

This work is further dedicated to the writer's brother and sister, David Allen Moses and Kelly Ann Moses for their loving and prayerful support throughout the entire process. It is also dedicated to the writer's young niece and nephew, Taylor Vaughn Moses, David Andrew Moses and young cousin, Roderiqua Williams. It is for these young persons that the writer prays to leave as a legacy the importance of furthering ones education.

Finally, this work is lovingly and eternally dedicated to my wife, Dr. Jacqueline M. Moses for her indomitable spirit, faith in God and the writer's ability to complete this project.

INTRODUCTION

> Miles Jerome Jones, "The challenge of the proclamation-that for which we are called to account-is as much about what is anticipated as it is the recognition of what governs the content. The matter of expectation speaks to what is looked for because of what has been found."[1]

A major challenge for the 21st century preacher is to proclaim a message of hope that stirs the emotion and gives strong impulse to the will of a congregation to move toward action. Moving toward action means a congregation becoming visibly connected within the community to those who are hopeless, bringing the community to a consciousness of promised hope; as well as providing ministries that serve as a catalyst to reverse community hopelessness as a result of preaching.

> If every community had a team of preachers who kept the tone of the good news before the people with relevant, timely preaching, keeping Jesus alive before them, letting the historical Jesus of Galilee, Judea, and Perea walk before them, and the risen Christ of the ages inspire and strengthen them, while lifting up those conditions that the good news exposes and seeks to redeem, the churches would reflect the tone of the good news of God.[2]

In every community there are people who experience hopelessness at some point in life. Poverty, racism, crime, unemployment and other social ills contribute to community hopelessness. In some communities, this has become socially accepted behavior. Despite the presence of churches, on almost every corner in some cities, there appears to be little impact from the Christian community that addresses hopelessness.

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[1]Miles Jerome Jones, *Preaching Papers: The Hampton & Virginia Union Lectures* (New York, NY: Martin Luther King Fellows Press, 1995), 61.

[2]Samuel D. Proctor, *Preaching About Crisis in the Community* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1988), 80.

Therefore, the questions is asked, "How can hopelessness within these communities be addressed by the church?"

Hopelessness is approached from a ministry context where the community has a poverty level that is 5.1% greater than the Chicago average, which is 19.6% and 142% greater than the Illinois average, which is 8.5%.[3] The community is 96.9% African American and the violent crime rate is 46.79%.[4] It appears that a majority of communities that experience hopelessness are within African American communities. The Report of the National Task Force on African American Men and Boys states; "The Black church should be a leading institution in promoting self-respect for others and a communal concern for the neighbor."[5] The church should be at the helm of addressing community hopelessness.

The 21st century preacher must prepare relevant sermons that address, not only the needs of the congregation, but also challenges the congregation to transform community hopelessness into hopefulness. Miles Jerome Jones encourages the preacher to "create a sermon with the expectation that such a personal statement of faith will move from utterance to action."[6] It is imperative that the 21st century preacher challenge the local congregations to provide:

1. A visual example of congregational connection to the community.

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[3]Area Vibes, Auburn Gresham Community, http://www.areavibes.com/chicago-il/auburn+gresham/employment/ (accessed December 2010).

[4]City of Chicago Department of Family and Support Services, Demographic Profile of Community Area 69. Greater Grand Crossing (December, 2010).

[5]"Report of the National Task Force on African American Men and Boys," *Repairing the Breach* (Chicago, IL: Noble Press, 1996), 83.

[6]Jones, *Preaching Papers*, 47.

2. A communal consciousness of hopelessness and the realization of promised hope.
3. A ministry that serves as a catalyst for hopeful change.

The Mount Hermon Missionary Baptist Church (MHMBC) is located on the Southside of Chicago, Illinois in the Auburn Gresham (Greater Grand Crossing) community. MHMBC provides a model of ministry that reflects preaching that challenges the congregation to transform community hopelessness to hope and beyond. The members of the congregation are socially conscience, with a heart to create a community of hope where hopelessness has thrived.

As a result of preaching that challenges congregations, MHMBC has emerged as an agent of hopeful change within the Auburn Gresham community. Connection to MHMBC and the Auburn Gresham community spans over forty years. Born into the congregation, he officially became a member in August 1972 at the age of six. He remained an active member until being elected as pastor in 2002 at the age of thirty-six years old. The thirty-year span form 1972 to 2002 has been filled with moments of joy and pain that helped shape the core tenets of the writer's belief that hopeless communities can be countered with hope from the church. Emerging as the fifth generation to preach the gospel, he succeeded his grandfather as pastor of MHMBC who served forty-one years. At one time, three generations of preachers from the family served simultaneously at MHMBC. Therefore, the heart of the writer is invested in his God given call to lead the congregation towards fulfilling the will of God for congregation and community. It has become his conviction to provide a portable model of a ministry of hope for congregations that are located in communities where hopelessness thrives. This has been the catalyst behind this Doctor of Ministry project.

Chapter one describes the personal life of the writer. The reader will be introduced to the spiritual journey of the writer. It will identify the experiences within the writer's life that has contributed to and shaped core beliefs, ideologies and concepts of ministry. This chapter will also include the contextual analysis of MHMBC and the spiritual connection of hope that has emerged as a theme throughout the writer's life and ministry.

Chapter two will review historical and current literature on preachers that have and continue to preach prophetically to inspire hope. The writer will evaluate methods applied by preachers mentioned within this chapter and utilize examples of prophetic preachers to draw comparisons towards the created model.

Chapter three will introduce the theoretical foundational support of the writer's project. The biblical foundations will introduce biblical text from the Old and New Testament that provide biblical case studies of people and communities that have experienced hopelessness and were transformed to hope through prophetic preaching. The historical foundations will provide the reader with historical and present socially conscious preachers that have challenged congregations and communities to transform hopelessness. The theological foundations will introduce the reader to scholarly models of hope and present the writer's theological position on the project matter.

Chapter four will introduce the reader to the methodology of the total project. The writer will present the step by step action plan including timelines related to the project. The writer will introduce the quantitative and qualitative methods applied to measure the effectiveness of the hypothesis.

Chapter five details the field experience results of the writer's research. The writer will present timelines, define the results of the methodology, discuss trends and interpret data that was tabulated from the research.

Chapter six will discuss the conclusion of the project, observations determined as a result of the research. The writer will conclude by sharing challenges as well as strong points of the project and how the project can be expanded to become a portable model.

CHAPTER ONE
MINISTRY FOCUS

Born on August 1, 1966, in Chicago, Illinois at Lying-in Hospital to the late Oscar Moses and Rosetta Allen Moses, family values have always been centered on faith in God, integrity, hard word, and honesty. My brother, David Allen Moses is three years older than me. We were were raised in a Christian home where both parents actively participated in church. We espoused the Christian faith and followed the principles of the Holy Bible to the best of our ability.

One of my earliest memories of family life was of being raised in a two-flat, four-unit apartment building off of 79th street in the inner city of Chicago, Illinois. The community was predominantly African American. My late paternal grandparents, O. T. and Bobbie Lou Moses who lived in the building, owned it. My family lived on the second floor in a two-bedroom apartment.

Living in the family building was a blessing. My grandparents or an elderly cousin, Lillian Gladney, who we affectionately called *Cousin Nig,* cared for David and me while my parents worked. My father worked as a janitor for the Chicago Housing Authority and my mother worked for Illinois Bell Phone Company.

Both paternal and maternal grandparents were deeply religious and believed prayer was essential to every aspect of life. My grandfather O. T. Moses prayed so loud we could hear him in our second floor apartment. My grandmother, Bobbie Lou, would

host church club meetings from time to time, where she and her Senior Women Missionary Society could also be heard unashamedly praying.

Reflecting on my early memories of life, everything revolved around the church. We were members of the Mount Hermon Missionary Baptist Church. My father was a deacon, my mother directed the choir, David and I both sang in the youth choir, my maternal grandfather, Reverend Joseph A. Allen was the pastor, and my maternal great grandfather, Reverend James H. Webb was the Assistant to the Pastor.

There were many fond memories that stood out from my early childhood. Family outings were always exciting. Whether it was a Friday evening going to China Town for dinner or loading up the car for the Wisconsin Dells, my happiest moments were when we were together as a family. In some instances, our happy moments were centered on special events at church. When Mount Hermon Missionary Baptist Church celebrated annual days, i.e., church, choir and the pastoral anniversary, there was a feeling of celebration within our home. Those were days when we would dress up in our best *church clothes* and anticipate sharing a special family meal whether at home or at church.

In 1971, at five years old, Jesus Christ and baptism intrigued me. My parents explained who Jesus was and how He sacrificed His life so everyone could go to heaven. One Sunday morning after my grandfather finished preaching, he extended the invitation for Christian Discipleship for the unsaved to receive salvation. This was the Sunday salvation was granted to me. My father and uncle held baptism on a first Sunday evening with my grandfather supervising the baptism. In hindsight my baptism has been a lasting memory. After my baptism the sensation of God overwhelmed me giving me a sense of

God's approval. Not totally clear about Jesus or baptism, the feeling of God's approval assured me that I had made the right choice.

The same year my father and mother purchased a three-flat apartment building about a mile west of my grandparent's property. It was also the year that my father's health began to take a rapid decline. My Father was a loving man. He loved the Lord and he loved going to church but he formed some bad habits early in life that led to his health declining at an early age. He started smoking at nine years old and he was a heavy drinker. Shortly after David was born my father's health took a turn for the worse. He was in his early thirties. Poor eating habits along with cigarettes and alcohol contributed to high blood pressure, severe headaches and other health issues. At thirty-nine years old he suffered his first stroke and shortly after that, his first heart attack. Because of poor health, my father was forced to go on disability. He could no longer work and therefore, he became a stay at home dad.

Not being able to work caused my father to sink into deep bouts of depression. He took care of household chores and cooked our family meals. He was a chef in the Korean War and cooking was one of his fortes. However, there were days when he stayed in bed all day only to get up to walk to the corner packaged goods store to buy a pint of Old Granddad whiskey and retreat to his room.

In 1975 my mother was blessed to start a new job at IBM that became the financial breakthrough our family needed. However, her new job created psychological affects on my father. Although it was a financial blessing for our family, my mother's career advancement became a challenge to my father's identity as the head of our home.

My father's illness coupled with depression and alcohol often triggered erratic, unpredictable, and sometimes violent behavior. When David, then twelve, got into a fight with an older teenage girl, Marilyn [redacted], who was sixteen, my father heard the commotion from the kitchen, came outside, grabbed Marilyn, pinned her to the garage, and choked her. My mother had to pull him off of Marilyn. There were several times when erratic behavior like this would occur causing my father to resort to violence.

The following year father suffered another stroke and was hospitalized for a week or so. He was released from the hospital on September 17, 1976. He wanted to come home so he could attend church for the Inspirational Choir's 15th year anniversary that Sunday afternoon. He was not able to attend the service as he took ill and was taken to Little Company of Mary Hospital. That day was the last time me and David saw our father alive. Sunday, September 19, 1976 my forty-five-year-old father died. My father's death impacted my life because his opinion of me mattered more than anything.

In 1978 my mom began to advance upward at IBM. Once she said that she and my father struggled financially for years. By the time she reached economic security for our family is when my father died.

My best friend from fourteen years old until we became adults was a kid by the name of Michael Thomas. We became friends in the neighborhood after we became acquainted in our freshman year at Mendel Catholic High School, a school for boys. We did everything together and we learned how to love one another as brothers. We went to school together, played football together, fought together, chased girls together, partied together, and drank together. We fell out from time to time but we always had a mutual respect for one another. In 2010, he suffered a massive heart attack at the age of forty-

four but recovered. Realizing the potential loss of my childhood friend impacted me tremendously.

As this document is being written from my office at church, deep reflection came upon me at a portrait that sits on the bookshelf in front of my desk. It is a picture of me standing between my paternal and maternal grandfathers, O. T. Moses and Reverend Joseph A. Allen the day I received my Masters of Arts in Theology Studies. The picture was taken on the June 6, 2000, outside of the Auditorium with me holding my diploma. Thirteen days later was June 19, 2000. African Americans celebrate this day as *Juneteenth Day*, one of the oldest known celebrations to African Americans commemorating the ending of slavery in the United States. The celebration of this date goes back to June 19, 1865 when the Union soldiers arrived at Galveston, Texas to the good news that the slaves had been freed two years earlier.

June 19th was the day that my paternal grandfather, O. T. Moses died. There was a sense of spiritual significance with liberation and my grandfather dying on that day in the same hospital that life began for me. Five years later my maternal grandfather, Reverend Joseph Allen died on Sunday, July 5, 2005, the day after Independence Day. Connecting the death dates of both of my grandfather's causes me to wonder if there is a message God is sending me as both men died on dates that symbolize liberation.

In looking at the two men in the photo, O. T. Moses and Reverend Joseph A. Allen caused me to realize the important roles they have played in shaping my father and mother's faith. Both were godly men who relied on faith in God to sustain their families. They exemplify for me a model of faith that defines how a Christian should live in times

of crisis. My grandparents passed their faith on to my parents and despite the hardships they faced, my parents passed their faith on to my brother and me.

My paternal grandfather, O. T. Moses had only one son, my father, but he never married my paternal grandmother. Her name was Mary Way, but the events as to why they never married are still quite sketchy because family secrets of the 1930's in the deep rural south were guarded. However, he married Bobbie Lou Williams in the 1930's and both of them raised my father to adulthood. My maternal grandfather, Reverend Joseph A. Allen, married my maternal grandmother, Dorothy Webb. To this union, two children were born; my late uncle, Reverend Norward A. Allen and my mother, Rosetta Allen. Dorothy died of complications unknown when my uncle was twelve years old and my mother was nine. Both grandfathers have stood as strong pillars in my life especially after the death of my father.

My mom was thirty-nine years old when my father died. Her faith became the most influential of all my family. After the death of my father, we did what we had always done in crisis, pray! Sunday mornings before church my mom would prepare breakfast for David and me, call us to the table, to pray. Sometimes with tears in her eyes she would pray. Sometimes she would get to the table and ask, *Who's going to pray today?* It was around our kitchen table that my brother and me began to pray out loud. After we prayed, we got dressed and went to church. There was something cathartic about Sunday within our household after the death of my father. There was something about being at church that encouraged and empowered us to press our way through crisis with the hope that Jesus would care enough for us to bring us through our pain.

The relationships created throughout my life have had both positive and negative effects on me. From the very beginning of my life, a strong foundation of faith was laid that had been passed on through several generations. My life resembles the building of a skyscraper; layer after layer being applied going upward on a strong foundation. The faith and steadfast hope of my family have been passed on to me. My family prayed and expressed their faith, hope, and love for God from the very beginning of my life. The inward faith of my family has been lived through the church as a platform to exercise their outward testimonies of God's Mercy. The faith of my parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, and aunts and uncles was expressed through church life. As a child, my parents prepared food with other church members to feed the homeless on skid row on Chicago's lower Wacker Drive as well as helped others through the church. They prayed in churches, hospitals, homes, restaurants, and other places. This was a normal way of life for me. Acting out our faith through the life of the church with other Christians was my discipleship training that strengthened my faith and provided a solid Christian foundation for me. My faith was strengthened through the lives of my family and other Christians. My foundation was set because of the moral expectations of the Church that have shaped my way of thinking. Far from perfect, my foundation taught me right from wrong. The wrong doings in my life have always been accompanied by the guilt of sin, conviction and a sense of betrayal that defies everything that the faith of my family in God has stood for. The negative or positive impacts of people on my life have always been weighed against the primary factors of the faith foundation, which was set in my life from my early existence.

My father was a good man who had a low flash point and was easily aggravated mainly due to his illnesses. The bad habits of smoking and drinking were adopted by me at the age of eighteen; acting out as he did somehow connect me to him. This behavior was played out through the five years of me attending Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, Illinois. Drinking smoking, fighting, and acting out in rebellion and defiance was defined the wilderness period in my life. My friends were good guys. We would look out for each other financially when we could; we would eat together, and shared with one another. We were friends with everyone, the good, bad, and indifferent. None of my close friends had a father living in the home; either their fathers were dead or deadbeats. We were gladiators, weekend warriors, and skirt chasers that started fights at every party and would wake up in drunken stupors. The strangeness of it all is that out of all of my friends, no one would wake up on Sundays and go to church except me. Joining the Hopewell Baptist Church in Carbondale Illinois my freshman year of college was necessary to keep my spiritual battery from running low, especially when listening to hear if the preacher had something to say to me.

The worldly lifestyle embraced in Carbondale gives me a sense of compassion for people who are experiencing a life like mine once was. My circle of friends consisted of gang bangers, drug dealers, and drug users. My understanding of people's plight is keen because the events of my prior life brought me face-to-face with all kinds of personalities from various walks of life.

Graduating from college, led me to begin working in law enforcement as a probation officer for Cook County Adult Probation Department in a specialized unit from 1990 until 1994. In 1994, my next job was that of a police officer for the Chicago

Housing Authority. While working as a policeman, my prior life experiences allowed me to have apathy for the African American community. As an undercover officer, buying narcotics, posing as a drug dealer, and setting up narcotic investigations allowed me to witness the hopelessness that plaque the African American community. Painfully aware of how the political system used the police department to create an atmosphere of terror and to exacerbate chaos in the community with unfair arrests to meet quotas for federal funding led me to become disenfranchised with the legal system. My eyes were opened to how law enforcement strategically orchestrated events to imprison minorities and continue the vicious cycle of apathy leading me to distance myself from the law enforcement field altogether.

1994 was also the year Jacqueline Marie Hawkins entered my life. We met in 1990 as she graduated from Worsham Mortuary School of Science. We were introduced by a mutual friend but we had no interest at that time of pursuing any relationship. It would be four years later that our paths would cross again.

It was a Thursday night in April 1994 that my grandfather was scheduled to preach at the St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church for their pastor, Reverend Joel D. Taylor's pastoral anniversary. After the program was over, making my way towards the door, a voice said, *Hello Terry.* Terry was my nickname. At the moment, while not remembering whom she was; one thing was for sure, she was gorgeous! She reminded me of how we met through our mutual friend four years earlier. About two weeks later, she called me and our romance began.

In 1995 the excitement of being a police officer slowly began to fade away and my prayer life began to emerge. Knot began to form in my stomach every day because

God wanted more out of my life. An increased prayer life brought me closer to God. This led to joining a prayer line that prayed every morning at 5:00 A.M. During that time, listening to preaching tapes became a preoccupation.

The prayer line became a vital part of my day, letting me know that God had something for me to do to place me in the center of His will. In the back of my mind, the thought of becoming a preacher surfaced, a thought that would quickly go away when weighing it against my personal life. Not feeling holy enough to be called into ministry, my thoughts were shared with my aging pastor and grandfather, Reverend Joseph A. Allen who advised me to keep praying. The more my prayers focused on preaching the more compelling preaching became.

All of my life, people told me that preaching was a strong possibility in my life. While their encouragement was inspirational, entering ministry had to be based on a calling from God, and not based on what others told me. God responded in ways that still cause me to tremble. There were many sleepless and tearful nights asking God for confirmation; too many for me to address.

In a dream, my late uncle, Reverend Norward Allen, and the late Reverend B. W. Smith sitting in opposite chairs of the vacant center chair where my pastor and grandfather sat, asked me directly, *Nephew, are you ready to preach?* In my heart, the moment to answer the call to preach had arrived but my dress was not appropriate for the occasion. He said, take fifteen minutes and get yourself together. At that moment someone emerged from a room carrying a white suit that was in a plastic garment bag. Preparing to put on the suit, it was noticeably wrinkled and dirty.

The sound of the phone woke me, it was 5:00 A.M., and the prayer line was calling. My dream was shared with the prayer line participants in dead silence. After we hung up, the phone rang again and it was my friend, Reverend John Jackson who was on the prayer line with me. He said, *I'm not saying that I can interpret dreams but it sounds like you are ready to answer the call to preach but you feel that your lifestyle is not presentable to the people; hence the dirty and wrinkled suit.* My feelings exactly!

A few Sundays later, while attending evening worship at Trinity United Church of Christ, the Reverend Johnny Ray Youngblood preached a sermon entitled *Birth Pains* and how there are moments of pain before deliverance. It felt as though Reverend Youngblood was talking directly to me. It was in the balcony of Trinity that the most impactful confirmation from God was revealed. After the sermon, the choir sung *Whatever Comes Just Keep Your Arms Around Me* caused me to crying like a baby, not ashamed, ready and willing to preach God's Word.

Sometime later, my grandfather allowed me to announce my calling to the congregation. It was after my confession to preach the gospel that a burden and unrests that had weighed me down for the past two years of my life were lifted.

Today, at the age of forty-five; the same age of my father when he died, my closeness to God is stronger than ever before. Relying on His promises in times of trouble and experiencing His faithfulness through the Holy Spirit during the preaching and teaching moment. God's presence and assurance are felt in times of prayer and meditation. There is a strong sense of confidence in knowing my purpose and what God has called me to do for this season of my life. Time is spent reflecting on every event that has brought joy or pain into my life as a part of my spiritual journey. God has masterfully

orchestrated the events of my life to bring me to a spiritual place of recognizing that He (God) is bigger than our minds can conceive and that life is in fact, a spiritual journey towards ultimately meeting Him face to face. My belief is that we all will meet God face to face either as our savior or judge. My belief is that God gives us the capacity as human beings to make decisions that will develop or destroy our spiritual walk with Him. Either decision that we make will not be free of trial and tribulation. However, my decision to develop a spiritual walk with God has been a journey of hope, always looking around the corner to see what God is going to do next, were will He lead me or what will He have me to do?

My spiritual life is ever evolving and challenging because of the people that God has brought into my life intellectually driving me to read and study. These encounters have allowed me to grow intellectually, especially when perusing sermons written in the infant stages of my ministry. The thought process of my sermons of yesteryear has a much different content and depth today. The past sixteen years of ministry has challenged me intellectually by the great minds of spiritual preaching giants. The two men that stand out in my mind are Reverend Dr. Jeremiah A. Wright Jr. and the late Reverend Dr. Frederick George Sampson. They both have stimulated my intellect and deepened my desire to learn in order to make the best of what God has given me. Their mastery of the human language or such homiletical giftedness was never experienced until introduced to their preaching.

One of my closest friends in the world is Reverend John E. Jackson. He pastors the Trinity United Church of Christ in Gary Indiana. We met in 1995 while working as police officers for the Chicago Housing Authority. God brought John into my life to

challenge my intellect. We accepted our call to ministry around the same time. My late grandfather and pastor, Reverend Joseph A. Allen, made it very clear that seminary education was necessary to further my understanding of God's word. However, it was my friend John that enrolled in McCormick Theological Seminary followed by me. We both completed our Masters level work at McCormick. It was John that personally introduced me to Reverend Dr. Jeremiah A. Wright Jr. and gave me my first set of cassette preaching series by Reverend Dr. Frederick George Sampson. We entered the Doctor of Ministry program at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio at the same time.

My pastor, Reverend Dr. Joel D. Taylor, has an earned doctorate from United Theological Seminary and he has been a source of encouragement towards my intellectual development.

Socially and civically, there is a sense of urgency to give eternal meaning to my ministry. After understanding that we are all tied together in the universe, one way or another, we have a moral obligation to care for one another. Christians should be able to honor their social and civic duty through the Church of Jesus Christ. The benefits gleaned from the church have allowed me to give back to someone else socially and civically. The church has been the platform for giving back to the world through outreach. When the church has fulfilled her responsibilities, she becomes a venue where ones social and civic responsibilities can be met. There is a sense of social and civic urgency to live out my faith through other people.

In 1988 my mother moved to Fort Wayne Indiana. It was twelve years after my father's death. She remarried in 1990 to a retired policeman, John Thomas Hill. In 2009 she and my step dad moved back to Illinois. My immediate family is close knit. My

family means everything to me. My family worships together in church. My family has not been immune from trials and tribulations. We have lost some close loved ones along the way, had a few sicknesses and surgeries along the way. We have had some recent additions as well. We are a family that has held on to hope in hard times. Our lives revolve around our faith in God and carrying out ministry. When we are faced with the vicissitudes of life, we do what we have always done and that is look to the Lord in faith and hope that *this too shall past*.

My late grandfather, Reverend Joseph A. Allen was my pastor until he retired in 2002. Succeeding him as pastor of the Mount Hermon Missionary Baptist Church, Reverend Allen taught me just about everything about being a pastor. He served as pastor for six churches in his seventy-five years of ministry. Forty-one of those years, he served Mount Hermon. As pastor, many days he suffered in silence because of what members of the church did to him. In observing his responses, sometimes he gave the right response, and sometimes he gave the wrong response. There were times that he would unleash his fury no matter where he was; in the pulpit or on the church doorstep. He ruled with an iron fist but you never found a man more committed to the people. He did as Jesus Christ did; he gave his life for the people. He led the people at the Mount Hermon Missionary Baptist Church the best way he knew how.

Much of my grandfather's character traits are in me; some characteristics make me proud, and others disappointed. Like him, my goal is to dedicate my life to serve the people at Mount Hermon. Because of my love for the people of Mount Hermon, giving them my very best is paramount to my ministry. In reflecting on the last ten years of my pastorate, encountering all kinds of people has strengthened me. Both love and deceit

have been experienced trying to be faithful as a pastor so that God can call me on the great day *Good and faithful servant.*

On July 27, 1996 God providence, orchestrated the events in my life that prepared me for marriage to the woman I believe that God has chosen especially for me. God showed me His fantastic favor when Jacqueline Hawkins said *yes* to my weak marriage proposal. It was Christmas Eve 1995, and for the life of me, a creative way to ask her to marry me was not forthcoming. Wanting to ask her over dinner was not working because all the restaurants were closed or full, so the question was popped in her pickup truck, and she said yes. Not knowing then, but fifteen years later, God revealed the blessing Jacqueline has been in my life. Jacqueline is my partner in life, love, marriage and ministry, and because of her, a better man has emerged. We have no children. We had aspirations of raising a family but it was not in the will of God and we are both fine with that. We do not know what the future holds for us but our lives are rooted in the Word of God and our hope is built on His Word. We both want to live a life whereby we can leave a legacy as husband and wife. We both want the universe to know that Oscar and Jacqueline Moses came this way. We pray that our marriage can be a model for young couples planning marriage. We are both evolving in our life, love and ministry.

After serving ten years as pastor of the Mount Hermon Missionary Baptist Church there are some nuances that have evolved that have significance on the model of ministry God has developed through me. Hope in hard times has been the hallmark and pivotal point of my ministry. My most effective trait as a pastor and preacher is when there are occasions to give someone biblical solutions for hardships and they can see hope for their

future. My best ministry is illuminated when pointing someone who is hurting to the *rock*, which is higher than them.

The community where the Mount Hermon Missionary Baptist Church is located is an economically challenged community. Hopelessness is clearly seen in the eyes of the youth that walk up and down the street with no purpose at all. Mount Hermon provides programs to the community that tries to instill hope in the hopeless. We offer safe passage programs, after school tutorial, mentoring plus and feeding programs for the youth to show them that the church does care. If our ministry can give hope to the children we serve perhaps they will feel compelled to do the same for future generations.

It is believed that God is developing within me the desire to advance the technological aspect of ministry to reach people on a global scale that are experiencing hopelessness. God is honing and shaping my spiritual gifts and personality to have the commitment and influence for the Kingdom of God on a broader scale to people that have been disenfranchised and deemed hopeless.

The urgency that drives me to accomplish this ministry is three fold; 1) Life: To walk faithfully in my God given life assignment; 2) Lost: To prophetically preach hope into people that have lost their way; 3) Legacy: To leave a legacy of hope for future generations.

The Model of Ministry that God is developing within and through me will challenge the faith community of Mount Hermon Missionary Baptist Church to take an active role in community empowerment. The preaching and teaching ministry of the church will empower those within the membership who are hopeless to hope and those with hope to ministry. The various outreach ministries will provide those who are serious

about the work of ministry a platform to live out their faith through community involvement. The Mount Hermon Missionary Baptist Church membership will discover the power of bringing hope to a community in social crisis.

The Model of Ministry at Mount Hermon Missionary Baptist Church will have an impact on subsequent ministries by providing a clear model that other ministries can emulate.

Chicago is the third largest city in America with a population of nearly three million people. Many people that live outside of Chicago often refer to three things as it relates to the city's reputation; the politics, the food and the crime. Chicago is nicknamed the Windy City, not because of its cold and boisterous winters but because of the tumultuous and boisterous politics. The city is also known for its food. It is the city made famous for the polish sausages on Maxwell Street and the famous Chicago style pizza. Unfortunately, Chicago is also known for its crime and vice. From the days of Al Capone and the mob to the days of the Black Gangster Disciples, Chicago has made quite a reputation for its criminal activities.

The neighborhood communities in Chicago are diverse. Although an integrated city, neighborhoods are ethically polarized and economically separated. The Mount Hermon Missionary Baptist church is where my ministry takes place on the south side of Chicago's inner city in a predominantly African American community.

Mount Hermon Missionary Baptist Church was organized in September 1923 by five deacons, ten women and Reverend W. M. Hamilton, who served as interim pastor until the first pastor, Reverend M. Sanford was called. Today Mount Hermon continues to recognize the need to remain an agent of change where she serves. The Greater Grand

Crossing community is often referred to as South Englewood. Englewood has become one of the nation's most notoriously dangerous communities plagued by criminal activity and apathy due to abject poverty. Greater Grand Crossing's borders are less than seven city blocks from Englewood. Conversely, Greater Grand Crossing is not out of range of the residual effects of the hopelessness that attributes to reckless criminal activity in Englewood. Poverty has been a contributing factor to apathy in the Greater Grand Crossing community and its diminishing population.

> Between 1980 and 1990 the population dropped from 45,218 to 38,644. Although as of 1990 a fifth of the population, 56 percent of which were African American women, lived at or below the poverty level, a third of the residents of Greater Grand Crossing were second-and third-generation property owners.[1]

According to a more recent report from the City of Chicago Department of Family Support Services there are 32,602 people that live in Greater Grand Crossing. 96.9% are African American, 0.6% is Caucasian, 1.2% are Hispanic, 0.1% are Asian and 1.0% are categorized as other. The total civilian labor force is 14,740. There are 11,949 people employed and 2,791 people unemployed with an unemployment rate of 18.9%. The violent crime rate is 46.79%.[2]

The community where Mount Hermon is located is called by many of its residents Boyz Town. There is another area called Boys Town that's situated on the north side of Chicago in a predominantly White American community that is the first officially recognized gay village in the United States.[3] Boyz Town where the Mount Hermon Missionary Baptist Church is located stands in racial, economic and social contrast to the

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[1]Local Community Fact Book, Chicago Fact Book Consortium, ed. Chicago Metropolitan Area, 1990,1995.

[2]City of Chicago Department of Family and Support Services, Demographic Profile of Community Area 69. Greater Grand Crossing (December, 2010).

[3]Boys Town, http://boystownlodging.com/(accessed December 2010).

north side community that bares the same name. Gang violence has been a part of the Grand Crossing Community as long as the writer can recollect and Boyz Town became the unofficial name in the mid 70's when gang violence increased.

John Edwards, community activist, who is known in the community, as *Rock* is a deacon in training at the Mount Hermon Baptist Church. Edwards, a founding member and Enforcer of the Black Fugitive Disciples grew up in the community where Mount Hermon is located. He recalls how many of the Black Fugitive Disciples in the community succumbed to drug addiction and incarceration that became the norm in the community because there were no programs or after school activities to keep young boys busy.[4]

Within the past ten years the killing in Greater Grand Crossing has increased. The Medill analysis showed contrasting changes in homicide numbers from 2000 through 2006 in Grand Boulevard, Washington Park and Greater Grand Crossing. In Greater Grand Crossing, eight people were killed in 2000. There were twenty-four people killed in 2006.[5] Many believed that the Chicago Housing Authorities Plan for Transformation was to blame for the increased murder rate in the Grand Crossing community. The plan was to redevelop Chicago's public housing units to create new housing and upgrade the overall stock of Chicago.[6] The results were 25,000 public housing residents misplaced across the city and many moved into the Greater Grand Crossing community. Unfortunately, there was an element of the population that fueled the ongoing and ever

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[4]John Edwards, interview by author, Chicago, IL, December 6, 2011.

[5]Northwestern University News, http://news.medill.northwestern.edu/chicago/news.aspx, (accessed December 2010).

[6]Ibid

increasing criminal statistics in public housing that migrated to Greater Grand Crossing. Although Chicago Housing Authority officials deny the *Plan for Transformation* as a contributing factor to the increase in the murder rate in Greater Grand Crossing, there are many that disagree.[7]

A current member of Mount Hermon who is still involved with the Black Gangster Disciples shared with the writer in 2008 that he was, at that time, engaged in a street gang war with rival gang members that moved to the community as a result of being displaced from Chicago Housing Authority.[8] One week after sharing the information, rival gang members shot him in the leg. The writer happened to be in the study at church when he heard the shots ring out. A phone call was made to the church with news that the young man had been shot. The writer was able to converse with the young man before he was transported to the hospital. He recovered with no complications.

Given the current conditions where Mount Hermon is located the church has once again experienced growth and has become an integral agent of change within the community. Its membership base stems from the immediate and neighboring community as well as a small diverse population of parishioners from various parts of the city. Currently, the membership has expanded from 100 members in 2002, to 485 members, with a consistent 225 attendees each Sunday morning in 2012. There are twenty-eight ministries at Mount Hermon created to serve the needs of both congregation and community. Several ministries have been added since 2002; Married Couples ministry, Singles ministry, Bereavement ministry, New Members ministry, Twelve Tribes

[7]Ibid.

[8]Interview with anonymous member, June 2008.

ministry, Media ministry, Member Services ministry and the Reverend Joseph A. Allen Scholarship ministry. Each ministry falls under the captions of Worship, Evangelism, Outreach, Discipleship and Youth Ministries.

Since the beginning of the writer's tenure as pastor, the overall vision of Mount Hermon is to provide the community access to services that address communal needs seven days a week and twenty-four hours a day. Today Mount Hermon is accessible to the community four-days a week between the hours of 10:00 A.M. and 6:00 P.M. The outreach ministry of Mount Hermon provides several services for the community. The After School Program, Mentoring Plus, and Safe Passage, are all community services provided by Mount Hermon through its non-profit organization, Exodus Unlimited. On January 17, 2007, the University of Chicago Hospital recognized Exodus Unlimited during the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Awards Ceremony for providing After School Care to youth within the Greater Grand Crossing Community. The services offered to the community through Mount Hermon provide a safe haven for forty-fifty children a day. The goal is to reduce educational apathy, gang activity and low reading scores within the community.

Each summer since 2005, Mount Hermon has provided a hot nutritional breakfast and lunch to over 100 children daily from the community that may have otherwise had no means of being fed. The six people that facilitate the program are members of Mount Hermon. They receive a small stipend accommodated by government grants. Since 2007, Mount Hermon has received grants annually that provide employment to at least four members and two people within the community. The grants received address the needs of teenage girls, teenage boys, and recovering addicts. Mount Hermon has established

linkage agreements with Haymarket House and the Chicago Department of Human Services to assist those in need of emergency housing or any life altering emergency circumstances that may occur. The Reverend Joseph A. Allen Scholarship has provided educational assistance to students in the community and congregation since 2006. In 2011, the outreach ministry of Mount Hermon provided 600 food baskets to those in need from the parking lot of the church edifice, distributed 1,800 meals to the homeless at Pacific Garden Missions and provided emergency living assistance to thirty-two walk-ins that came to the church in distress.

On Tuesday nights, Mount Hermon offers the Christian Growth Academy to its members and the community. The Mount Hermon Christian Growth Academy was created in 2009 to strengthen the teaching ministry of the church and as a result of poor Sunday school attendance. Sunday school was eliminated and the Christian Growth Academy became the primary tool of Christian Education. Several classes are offered to meet the needs of a growing congregation. Each Tuesday evening at 5:30 P.M. until 6:30 P.M., the church provides a lite meal. At 6:30 P.M. classes begin. The attendee has the option of participating in the Sunday school curriculum class, the Purpose Driven Life class, Financial Peace class, Men's class, Women's class, Teen Ministry class or the children's class. At 7:15 P.M., all classes come together in the sanctuary for the Pastor's Class that last until 8:00 P.M. The attendance is between thirty-fifty persons weekly.

The atmosphere in worship on Sunday mornings is charismatic. Mount Hermon has adopted its style of worship as *Tragressional.* The author created the word to describe the ambience of Mount Hermon during worship and the ministry it offers. Tragressional is comprised of two words; tradition and progressive. The worship is traditional in that it

does not reflect the more relaxed contemporary style of church where blue jeans and more casual attire is the norm. The dress code in Mount Hermon is the traditional suit, dress and pant suits for women with a very small populace of blue jeans. The choir is uniformed, the ushers wear the traditional uniform, the deacons are in suits, the mothers of the church wear white and ministers wear dark suits or clergy robes. Mount Hermon is progressive from the standpoint of its message, members and ministry. The message preached on Sunday mornings are designed to educate and inspire the membership and ministry to become an agent of progressive change within the community. The Christ centered communal mantra that is repeated by the congregation every Sunday morning during worship concentrates on three points of practice: 1) Humility towards our Christ; 2) Hospitality within our Congregation; and 3) Hard work within our Community.

There are many members within the ministry of Mount Hermon that reside in the community that are victims of its apathetic surroundings. Yet, there is an element of working class, professionals that make up the membership that come from miles away to worship. The socio-economic status of the congregation is somewhat diverse yet leans towards the middle to low-income genre as it reflect in the 2011 financial report. The annual income of Mount Hermon in 2011 was $245,000.00 of which only eight persons within the congregation contributed over $5,000.00 and the highest contribution being $19,000.00.

The organizational structure within the Baptist church is autonomous and Mount Hermon has structured its organizational chart with the Pastor as the head of the congregation. The Chairman of Deacons, Finance and Trustees come under the Pastoral

Office. Under the Chairman's are the leaders of Discipleship, Outreach, Evangelism, Worship, and Youth Ministry.

The overall identity of Mount Hermon is healthily moving towards accomplishing its ministry goals and objectives. However, the writer must identify the weaknesses within the context of Mount Hermon as crucial hindrances in the developing areas of future projects. Mount Hermon still has a small element of resistance that has lingered from its inception. There are a few families that remain resistant only because of who the writer is. It was relayed to the writer while he attended McCormick Theological Seminary that one of the most difficult tasks for a pastor is to attempt to pastor the church where he grew up. In a sense, familiarity of the congregation has been experienced. However, after ten years of serving as pastor of Mount Hermon, many of the old membership has passed on and today the church is almost comprised of members that have joined within the last ten years. There are some members that were under Reverend Allen's membership that will never see me as pastor but they do respect the office of pastor.

Hypothetically, my life experience and the history of the Mount Hermon Missionary Baptist Church have been providentially orchestrated by God to come together as pastor and congregation to transform community hopelessness to hope and beyond.

On the surface, several adverse occasions have appeared to be tragic or negatively life altering. However, it has been through crisis and adverse episodes that a thread of hope has been woven into the very landscape of my life.

There is an apparent connection to my early development and life experiences as God prepared me to minister to the Grand Crossing community and the Mount Hermon church family.

The experiences of growing up in a family that had moments of crisis has been channeled towards positivity as a result of my family's hope in God. Without the demonstrations of having hope in God in times of crisis as exhibited by my family through their relationship with God and the church, my life would have turned out negatively. Conversely, because of my experiences, a challenge can be waged to the membership of Mount Hermon to transform community hopelessness to hope and beyond.

God can take the negative aspects of one's life and use it for the good of His divine plan where there is hope. Romans 8:28 states, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

CHAPTER TWO

STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY MODEL

Each foundation paper developed a congruent theme of hope in God emerging through his prophet. There have always been communities of people that have been confronted with hopelessness and have come to these findings: "Sin is the cause of hopelessness and has prevented God from living harmoniously with humanity." Hopelessness emerges when options are not perceived to reverse a despairing life situation. Hopelessness is fostered through spiritual apathy which disconnects one from the possibilities of God's providential involvement. Hopelessness moves the prophet into social action.

The biblical foundations were essential to the researcher's project by providing several biblical texts where communal hopelessness was transformed to hope and beyond by the emergence of a prophet. The Old Testament passages confirmed communities that were affected by hopelessness as a result of sin in the world.

In Exodus the Children of Israel experienced hopelessness in Egypt. Moses' encounter with God moved him to social action on the behalf of the oppressed. The pilgrimage in the wilderness was where Israel had hope of reaching the Promised Land. Moses instilled hope in the Children of Israel but Joshua moved the community beyond hope by possessing the Promised Land.

The community in Psalm 137 experienced hopelessness as a result of sin. God permitted the Babylonians to take Israel into exiles. The psalmist reflection on past experiences of God in Mount Zion affirmed the community of liberation, restitution and vengeance from the hands of their oppressor.

The community was restored through prophetic preaching of Ezekiel 37. Hopelessness emerges when people are left with no options to reverse life's despairing circumstances. On the contrary, hope evolves when God summons those who are spiritually connected to Him to move into action on the behalf of the oppressed.

In the New Testament hopelessness is countered through the prophetic preaching ministry of Jesus Christ. The earthly ministry of Jesus was confirmed in His mission statement to preach liberation to the poor, which liberated His followers to hope and future eternal glory. The followers of Jesus Christ became the Church that would imitate His ministry and move towards social action against oppression that countered liberation of the oppressed. In Matthew 16:18 Jesus said, "And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." This passage depicts the action of the church confronting evil that exists in the world. Such is the mandate of the followers of Jesus Christ to address life's circumstances that foster hopelessness. Likewise, Paul's epistles were letters to the Church emphatically written to believers that proclaimed a message of eternal hope in Jesus Christ. Therefore, there were communities that faced hopelessness in both the Old and New Testament that were given hope through a preacher. The biblical foundations affirm the role of the preacher to challenge and transform community hopelessness to hope and beyond. The New Testament passage Matthew 16:18 will be utilized in a

preaching series to impress the importance of challenging the church to move towards social action.

The historical foundations provided the researcher with examples of hope-challenged communities where preaching countered hopelessness. History reveals a consistent theme of God's interaction in the lives of His people through the prophetic voice. The prophet emerges where communities are overshadowed by poverty, crime and other social ills. The preacher prophet must challenge congregations to transform community hopelessness to hope and beyond hope. Three different historical models of prophetic preaching were used to challenge congregations to transform community hopelessness to hope and beyond.

First, Reverend Adam Clayton Powell utilized his influence as a preacher and politician to gain insight into causes of hopelessness. Powell confronted the causes of hopelessness to promote change. Reverend Powell's position was one of political alignment. His political involvement as a member of the U. S. Congress placed him in positions to affect change within the community. Political themes emerged from the pulpit of the Abyssinian Baptist Church where he served as pastor. Powell preached from biblical passages that addressed the political concerns within the community of that day. Powell challenged the congregation to transform the community through information he disseminated during the preaching experience.

Secondly, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s approach to preaching was a position of non-alignment. Dr. King refused to align himself politically to be the conscience of politics. Dr. King believed that would be most effective by being the moral conscience in a politically corrupt society. Dr. King's preaching was a universal message to the Church

to move towards social action and confront issues that led to hopelessness. King's prominence within the civil rights movement provided him a global platform.

Thirdly, Dr. Samuel Dewitt Proctor also preached from a position of non-political alignment. Proctor's model differed from King's in that his challenge was to a concentrated population that would affect immediate change in the community that made an impact in the world.

Dr. Proctor's model was found to be relative in addressing the membership at MHMBC. The preacher that does not have a large platform such as Powell or King may choose a position of political alignment or non-political alignment. However, when there is limited or no access to large audiences from a preaching perspective it is necessary to concentrate on challenging the immediate congregation where the preacher preaches. Concentration towards a specific congregation will allow the preacher to preach sermons that challenge the congregants to transform community hopelessness to hope and beyond. The possibilities of a challenged congregation to nurture hope within the community can spread beyond local communities and possibly have a global effect. Dr. Proctor's model will be used as a guide for the development of this project model. Dr. Samuel Dewitt Proctor's book, *The Substance of Things Hoped For* will be referenced throughout a preaching series designed to challenge the members of MHMBCH to transform community hopelessness to hope and beyond.

The theological foundations were meaningful whereas it provided the researcher with a broader concept of hope from a theological perspective. Various theological perspectives when viewed as a collective set the ground out of which a theology of hope emerged for this project. A comparative analysis of Jürgen Moltman's and Reverend

Jesse Jackson Jr.'s theologies of hope illuminated the perspective of one not oppressed but has experienced oppression and one born in oppression.

From the biblical, historical and theological foundations emerged a theology of hope from three lenses. First, the theology of hope was viewed from the lens of the oppressed that are spiritually connected to:

1. The Sovereign Existence of God
2. The Love of God
3. The Providence of God
4. The Promises of God
5. The Challenge of the Church

Second, the theology of hope was viewed from the lens of those who are not oppressed but share the same commonality in their perspective of hope as the oppressed. They are moved towards liberation on the behalf of the oppressed.

Third, the theology of hope was viewed from the lens of the oppressor. The hope of the oppressor is not based on the Sovereign Existence of God but greed that maintain its position over the oppressed.

Therefore, the definition of the theology of hope will be utilized in this project by preaching five sermons that relate to the five pillars that define a personal theology of hope. A pre-sermon series questionnaire was created to ascertain the congregational perspective of hope and a post preaching series survey was used to determine the effectiveness of the preaching series and the inspiration of the congregant to transform community hoplesessness.

CHAPTER THREE
FOUNDATIONS

Biblical Foundations

The Old Testament book of Psalms embodies many instances of persons moving from hopelessness to hope and beyond. Psalm 137 depicts a community that has experienced a sense of hopelessness. In Psalm 137 the psalmist verbalizes a myriad of emotions in the form of a communal lament that expresses apathetic feelings towards the oppressor and ultimately capsulizes the psalm with a curse upon his oppressor. This is considered an imprecatory psalm, meaning that it pronounces a curse.

Along with a community of migrants from Judea the psalmist has been taken captive from his homeland to the low lands of Babylon and forced to live under humiliating circumstances. The psalmist describes the sense of grief and hopelessness as a result of being separated from his homeland as well as the temple of Jerusalem. Within verses 1-3, the psalmist depicts a community weeping by the Rivers of Babylon. The rivers have its reference to the canals flowing from or to the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. This particular canal, called Kebar, stemmed from the Euphrates River north of Babylon. It was not unusual for those within the Jewish community to gather at the river as a venue to meet God or to hear from God or to reminisce about God. In this particular Psalm the Jewish migrants gathered with expectation of returning back to their homeland. The river became a bonding place for the community of migrants in Psalm 137. The Jewish community has always had a connection to experiencing God at rivers. Ezekiel received

his calling into the ministry by the River Chebar in Ezekiel 1:3 and Daniel saw visions by the river in Daniel 8:2. In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul encountered a Jewish community praying by the river side in Acts 16:13.

The psalmist described the river as the gathering place for the captives to reflect and weep about being separated from their homeland. Although they were in a depressing situation there are shades of hope expressed in their captivity. The willow trees that populated the lands of Babylon encompassed the river Kebar. It was upon these willow trees that those who were captive that played musical instruments hung their harps. The hanging of the harps in the willow trees was symbolic of their despondent feelings of being separated from Jerusalem and the temple. There was no joy or cause for music because of their present condition. However, they did not destroy their harps, they merely laid them aside. This suggests that there was some angst of hope that they would once again recover their instruments and produce the music that once brought them joy in the temple. As their lives were on hold being held captive in Babylon so was the usage of their instruments on hold being detained by the willow tree.

The captors made an insensitive and insulting request for the captives to entertain them by singing the songs of Zion. This gesture by the captor suggested to the captives that the songs of Zion were sung to a God that had abandoned them in their present predicament. The request to make mirth and to sing was to mock and insult the faith of the captives in their God. However, the captives had an interrogative response, "How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?"[1] This is an indicting question for the captives to ask for they had localized and limited God to a geographical location that could only be worshipped in Jerusalem. The question however causes them to reflect and commit

[1]Ps 137:4.

themselves to holding Jerusalem close and dear to their hearts. The injection of the term *let my right hand forget her cunning* has implications that refer to the harps that were hung in the willow trees.[2] The Living Bible translates verses 5-6 to say, "If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill upon the harp. If I fail to love her more than my highest joy, let me never sing again."[3] The psalmist reflection, devotion, and loyalty to Jerusalem evokes within this passage hope that the God of Jerusalem still held the fate of His people within His hands. The psalmist has not abandoned God even though his present circumstance appears to be such of abandonment by God.

In verses 7-9 the psalmist turned to God in prayer and supplication concerning the Edomites. The Edomites assisted Babylon in the capture of Jerusalem and encouraged its destruction. According to Obadiah 1:10-14, not only did the Edomites assist Babylon, but they were joyous over the destruction of Jerusalem. Ezekiel 25:12-14 expressed God's vengeance upon the Edomites for their participation in the destruction of Jerusalem.

The psalmist expressed his pernicious requests that God would curse the oppressor Babylon. "O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy *shall he be*, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. Happy *shall he be*, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones."[4] The curse of devastation pronounced on Babylon would be God's way of vindicating His people in an eye for an eye manner which was believed and embraced by these Jewish captives according to Leviticus 24:19-20. "And if a man cause a blemish in his neighbour; as he hath done, so shall it be done to him; Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth: as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to

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[2]Ps 137:5.

[3]Ps 137:5-6 (TLB).

[4]Ps 137:8-9.

him *again*."[5] The psalmist suggests that the punishment of Babylon should fit the crime they carried out on Jerusalem.

The community of captives in Psalm 137 is characterized by events that lead them to conditions where they had to pursue hope. The areas of their hope are four-fold. First, their hope was displayed in the hanging of the harps. They did not destroy the harps but they merely laid them aside in hopes that they would someday retrieve them and enjoy once again the melodies that brought them solace in Jerusalem. Second, the question and reflection of the captives in response to their captors insensitive request resonates a continuous devotion and loyalty concerning Zion. The captives assure God that they had abandoned Him. Third, their hope was displayed in prayer. Even though the captives were living in conditions that were humiliating and taunting as it relates to their predicament they never abandoned prayer. To continue in prayer meant that they held on to the hope that God would hear them and deliver them from Babylon that they may return to Jerusalem as well as be vindicated. The curse pronounced in the prayer was that God would deal with their enemy accordingly and their joy would be restored in Jerusalem.

In Joshua 1:1-9 we see a community of nomad travelers that have been delivered from Egyptian bondage only to wander in the wilderness for forty years. Moses, whom led the Exile of Jews out of Egypt, was not successful in bringing them to the land that God had promised. According to Deuteronomy 31, Moses, in his declining years and final stage of his leadership summons all of the Children of Israel and his assistant Joshua and charges them to go forward under Joshua's leadership to the land of promise. In Joshua chapter 1, Moses is dead and God reminds Joshua that He will make good on his

[5]Lev 24:19-20.

promises and deliver the Children of Israel to their new homeland. Joshua received repeated encouragement from God to *be strong and of good courage*. However, while in the wilderness, hopelessness and despair became the way of life for these nomad travelers. Joshua had the charge of remaining hopeful at a critical time of Jewish history that he may set an example to the people of God's faithfulness and that they may not lose hope.

In verses 2-4, God commanded Joshua to go forward after the death of Moses. Moses is dead, the congregation is grieving, they have a history of murmuring and complaining that was directed at their leadership, they are weary from forty years of anticipated promises and their enemies must be confronted before they can gain access into the promise land. God reminded Joshua of future conquest over his enemies and full access to the land by virtue of the promise he has made. In verse 5, God encouraged Joshua to remain hopeful of His protection, presence and promises, "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, *so* I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."[6] In verses 6-7, God assured Joshua again by reminding him twice to be strong and courageous. This will be the third time in a series of five within chapter 1 that God has encouraged Joshua by saying be strong and of good courage. God inspired Joshua to be hopeful and to follow the specific instructions that Moses had given as a model of ministry that would guarantee his success. In verse 8, God gave Joshua the mandate to speak of and meditate on the book of the law. Joshua was instructed that his preaching and his meditation should be on the book of the law to guarantee the success of Israel. The book of the law was written by Moses and had within it all of the principles and mores that God had given to Moses to proclaim to the people to

[6]Jo1:5.

govern their lives. It was essential to the victory of God's people. God instructed Joshua that his success depended upon speaking and meditating on the book of the law that he may lead the people from hope in the wilderness beyond hope to the Promised Land. God gave Joshua, for the fourth time, the mandate to be strong and of good courage in verse 9. The author does not leave chapter 1 without one final mandate to be strong and of good courage in the final verse of chapter 1. The mandate to be strong and of good courage was a plea from God to Joshua to remain hopeful in the face of opposition. God was preparing Joshua for opposition that ultimately will be a precursor to occupying the land of promise. Joshua chapter 1:1-9 is a biblical case study of how God, through prophetic preaching, moves a community from hopelessness, to hope and beyond hope. In review of the history of the Children of Israel, the time in Egyptian bondage was a time of hopelessness. Hope became a factor when Moses brought them out of Egypt with anticipation of occupying the Promised Land. Joshua moved the Children of Israel beyond hope to the Promise Land through his prophetic ministry of remaining strong and of good courage and by speaking to the people and meditating on the book of the law.

The Old Testament prophet Ezekiel also prophesied during the Babylonian exile in 597 B.C. Ezekiel's prophecy was to communicate to a community in crisis that God had not abandoned them. Robert R. Wilson, Professor of Old Testament at Yale University states, "Still the picture was not totally dark. The same God who had deserted the city would ultimately return to it, and those exiles who remained righteous could again worship there. In the crisis of exile, God did not finally reject the people of Israel

but continued to reach out to them through the prophet, even when they refused to listen."[7]

In chapter 37:1-14, Ezekiel envisions a dispirited, disinherited and disjointed valley of dry bones, which come back to life through the Spirit and the Word of the Lord. The main topics that are developed in this text are the hand of the Lord on the prophet Ezekiel, the spiritual death of a community in crisis, and the message of hope that brings restoration.

Ezekiel described the manner in which God led him to the valley of dry bones. "The hand of the LORD was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley which *was* full of bones,"[8] He is placed in the middle of the valley and led about to take notice of the dry condition in which the bones have been scattered. The dry state of the bones gives the implication that the valley was a scene of carnage left from a battlefield many years earlier. The image of the dry bones were, "The depiction of a large number of corpses that had been denied a proper burial is reminiscent of many battle scenes and descriptions of battle scenes found in the earliest periods of Mesopotamian and Egyptian history."[9] The dry bones left unburied according to Matthew Henry has a suggestion that, "they lay *unburied* in the *open valley,* which encouraged the hopes of their resurrection."[10]

After Ezekiel notes the condition of the dry bones God poses a question to the prophet of whether the bones could come back to life. "And he said unto me, Son of man,

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[7]Robert R. Wilson, *Prophecy in Crisis: The Call of Ezekiel* (Article, 1984), 130.

[8]Ez 37:1.

[9]Bible Background Commentary

[10]*Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996, c1991), Ez 37:1.

can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest."[11] Ezekiel's profession establishes that the hope for restoration becomes totally dependent upon the word of the Lord. God commanded Ezekiel to prophesy to the bones to "hear the word of the Lord."[12] When God spoke to the dry bones, He gave them a message of restorative hope that the breath of life would once again restore them from their spiritually dead state to total restoration. When Ezekiel prophesied to the valley of dry bones as God commanded, a noise ensued along with shaking and the dispirited and disconnected bones that were scattered in the valley connected themselves to the bodies from which they were separated. However, there was no life force present. "And when I beheld, lo, the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above: but *there was* no breath in them."[13] God commanded Ezekiel to prophesy to the wind with specific instructions to petition breath from the four winds and breathe upon the corpses that they may live.

Upon the obedience of Ezekiel to prophesy to the four winds, breath entered the bodies and they were resurrected standing as a vast army. God commanded Ezekiel to prophesy a message of hope that would restore their faith in God and community. The message was one of restorative hope that God would bring spiritual life into what appeared to be a hopelessly severed relationship between himself and his people. The end results would lead Israel back to Jerusalem with hopes of restoring the land and the temple. The prophetic charge to Ezekiel was to prophecy a message of hope from God that life might be restored to the spiritually dead and that those prophesied to would know

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[11]Ez 37:3.

[12]Ez 37:4.

[13]Ez 37:8.

God. The picture of the dead in Ezekiel's valley of dry bones were not buried which presents a picture of hope that life would be restored. The preaching of Ezekiel in the valley brought life to that which was dead. It provided hope to move this once dispirited, disconnected people beyond their present predicament to a restorative relationship with God.

In the New Testament, Jesus continues in the vein of the Old Testament prophet to bring a message of hope to those who are in crisis. When Jesus preached his messages provoked a reaction from his audience that challenged their faith. His message was hope for those who were disinherited and disenfranchised to move them beyond their present circumstances and a challenge for those who rejected his mission as the son of God.

In Luke 4:18-19, Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord *is* upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

Luke 4:18-19 details the priorities of Jesus' ministry and the power of effective preaching when filled with the Holy Spirit. Jesus preached a message that shocked his audience yet challenged their faith. "Luke shows how Jesus' own preaching unfolds an interpretation of the tradition which shocked people. Interpreting the tradition—the Bible—was and is the essential aspect of any teaching of Jesus and his followers (Lk 4:15 and 31). Jesus' activity is hermeneutical, which he is able to accomplish with authority because the Spirit fills him.[14]

[14]Jacques Matthey, "Luke 4:16-30—the Spirit's mission manifesto—Jesus' hermeneutics—and Luke's editorial" *International Review of Mission,* Article, 89 no 352 (January 2000): 5.

The passage that Jesus preached announcing his ministry came from the book of Isaiah. Jesus announced that the prophecy of Isaiah had come to fruition that day as he was God's word of hope made manifest. The audience initial reaction perhaps denotes that they were surprised and not able to connect Jesus' divinity as in an authoritative role but merely saw him as Joseph the carpenter's son. Jesus announced that his ministry would surpass his own hometown whereas, "No prophet is accepted in his own country."[15] The crowd's final reaction was one of rejection. Jesus' message suggests to his audience that he would emerge as a prophet of hope to those outside of his community and become a pariah to those who rejected his message. Jesus preached without reservations of which he may offend yet those who embraced his message were given hope to move beyond their hopeless circumstances.

Next, we will take a closer look at Mark 4:35-41 and Mark 5:1. The context of chapter 4 presents the ministry of Jesus flourishing and the teaching and preaching of his ministry made simple for people to understand. Chapter 4 begins with a parable of the sower. Jesus teaches his followers the necessity of the word of God, which he compares to a seed, lodging in the hearts of men that they may live with hopeful expectations of bearing fruit. The parable gives insight into the Kingdom of God and how those who could not see or understand God's Kingdom may be given sight through the simplicity of stories concerning the Kingdom. Jesus emphasized how there were many whose eyes and ears were open to the world but closed to the word and ways of God. He attributes the inability for some to understand God's word to the strategic efforts of Satan to steal the seed of God's word for the purpose of prohibiting fruitfulness and liberation through the word of God. Jesus compared the word of God as light that should not be hidden or kept

[15]Lk 4:24.

secretive but displayed for all. The point Jesus expounded was that God's Word brings light to a dark world. The challenge Jesus is presenting emphasizes hope, not in the world, but hope in the word of God. The mandate is to view life from a position of hope in the word of God and not by the world's standards.

Jesus never ceased to share stories with his disciples. When he was alone with them he often explained in greater detail parables for their understanding. In Mark 4:35-41, Jesus had just finished a day of teaching and preaching when he turned to his disciples and said, "Let us go over to the other side."[16] Jesus and the twelve disciples were at the Sea of Galilee. The writer supposes that Jesus was exhausted from the day of ministry and sought the opportunity to appreciate rest. The multitude was sent away and Jesus was taken aboard the ship with the twelve disciples. Although Jesus makes the command to the twelve to cross over to the other side there were other ships that followed him. Perhaps they followed Jesus in an effort to hear more of his teachings. Many of Jesus' disciples were experienced fishermen and had great knowledge of navigating ships on the sea. However, a great storm of winds and waves arose that afflicted the ship and water eventually began to fill the ship until it became full of water. Jesus, according to verse 38 was in the hinder part of the ship asleep on a pillow when the disciples awoke him and asked, "Master carest though not that we perish?"[17] The disciples deem their situation life threatening and they want to know if Jesus cared about their present predicament. Jesus arose and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace be still."[18] The storm ceased at the command of Jesus. Jesus addressed his disciples and said, "Why are

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[16]Mk 4:35.

[17]Mk 4:38.

[18]Mk 4:39.

ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?"[19] In awe, the disciples seem to see Jesus from a new perspective and inquire with one another about Jesus' divine ability to have authority over the storm. Mark 5:1 records, "And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes."[20]

There are critical elements to this story that demonstrates that the preaching and teaching ministry of Jesus was intentional and strategically directed to transform the life of his followers to hope and beyond. First, it is essential to note that prior to the storm experience Jesus gave them insight to understanding hope in the Kingdom of God through his teaching. The Kingdom could not be seen or understood with physical efforts but could only be comprehended through faith in the word of God taking root in the heart of the believer.

Second, Jesus thought it necessary to present a set of circumstances that appeared hopeless to move the faith of the disciples beyond their limited faith. The storm arose, the winds and waves beat the ship, water began to fill the ship and Jesus was sleep. The writer senses, by virtue of the disciples question to Jesus, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?"[21] The hopelessness of the disciples. They saw their situation as final and they felt as though Jesus was disconnected from their circumstances.

Third, we see Jesus' intervention in their crisis and his application to bring hope to a seemingly hopeless situation. Jesus applies the principles of his teachings earlier that day and emphasizes the vital importance of having God's Word lodged in the heart. He brings peace and hope in his word. Jesus says to the storm, "Peace be still!" and the storm

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[19]Mk 4:40.

[20]Mk 5:1.

[21]Mk 4:38.

ceases. The disciples now have hope of making it to the other side based on the words of Jesus Christ. Jesus rebuked the disciples for having no faith although they have witnessed his miraculous powers. The disciples now have a different perspective of Jesus and a new inclination concerning hope. Fourth, Mark 5:1 finalizes the lesson that Jesus teaches of moving from hopelessness to hope and beyond. In reflection, the disciples were in what appeared to be a hopeless situation; the storm appeared to be final. However, Jesus moved their hopelessness to hope by causing the storm to cease with his words. The disciples, at the word of Jesus and the cessation of the storm, had hoped to arrive to the other side safely. Mark 5:1 indicates that the disciples have now moved beyond their hopes and have arrived to their intended destination.

Jesus' statement in Matthew 16:18 calls the church in to social action, "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."[22] Gates are defensively designed to protect boundaries. The text suggests a church that progressively moves towards hell. This passage depicts the action of the church confronting evil that exists in the world. Such is the mandate of the followers of Jesus Christ to address life's circumstances that foster hopelessness.

In Romans 8:24-28 the Apostle Paul emphasizes hope in the work of the Holy Spirit after the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In Romans 8 the word spirit is mentioned twenty times and in verse 24, Paul says, "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. Likewise the Spirit also

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[22]*The Holy Bible: King James Version* (Bellingham WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995), Mt 16:18, electronic ed.

helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."[23]

The spirit assists us in moving from hopelessness to hope and beyond in 3 ways:

1. The Spirit gives confidence concerning the promises of God. The key word in verses 24-25 is Hope. It is used five times. The first three times *elpiz* (anticipate with pleasure) and the last two are *elpizo (expect or confide)*. We cannot have salvation apart from hope. Our hope is based on the promises of God. We cannot expect to be glorified on this earth but our hope and expectation is glorification in the world to come. As followers of Christ and his teachings we anticipate with pleasure and we expect with confidence that our eternal salvation and destination is secured in heaven. The Apostle Paul emphasizes the promise of our salvation and eternal reward and the confidence we have in the Spirit. Our hope is that there is no condemnation to be dreaded as a Christian because all of our past, present and future sins have been dealt with on Calvary through the vicarious death of Jesus Christ.

2. The Spirit assists our prayers to God. The key word in verse 26 is help. Paul says that the spirit helps our infirmities. The word infirmity means to lack power, frailty, disability or moral weaknesses. Paul says that when we lack power, or when we are frail, or even when we experience moral weaknesses, the Holy Spirit helps us pray. The word helpeth gives us a clear view of the one's responsibility in prayer as well as the Holy Spirit's role. The word helpeth means to take hold of —face to face! The word picture is of a man that struggles to move a heavy log. Along comes the other man, who picks up the other end to help. One is on each end of the log and they face each other so they work together to move the log. Paul implies that the Holy Spirit positions Himself on the opposite end of our prayer to help lift it to God. The Holy Spirit will not do all of the work. We do not know how or what to pray but our hope is in the assistance of the Holy Spirit. God searches our hearts and knows what is in the mind of the Spirit. He (Jesus) makes intercession according to the will of God. The Holy Spirit intercedes in our hearts and Jesus is interceding for us in heaven.

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[23]Ro 8:24-28.

3. The Spirit gives us assurance of God's plan. Paul concludes our text by saying, "We know that all things work together."[24] Together is the Greek word synergeo where we get the word synergy. It means to cooperate. When Paul says all things work together he means that all components of life whether good or bad are working in harmony for our good. It does not mean that everything that happens is good but it means that God will work it for our good. The Apostle concludes verse 28 with the basis of our promise solely relying on our love and hope in Jesus Christ. The Living Bible translation: "We know it will work for our good when we love God and fit into His plans."[25]

Historical Foundations

Historically, communities and cultures have always been confronted by hopelessness. Just as Pharaoh created an environment of hope among the community of God's people there have been Pharaoh's in every generation. The causes of hopelessness within communities have always stemmed from oppression from those who wield political authority and deny certain people within certain community's civil rights. The symptoms of hopelessness are prevalent within communities where the essentials for living and thriving become sparse and social crisis emerges. (History determines that the basic essentials of life are clean air, food, water, shelter, companionship and also hope). The researcher contends that there has always been a prophetic, prominent voice called from God to challenged people in crises to transform hopeless communities to hope and beyond. Symptoms of hopelessness are reversed through social crisis preaching.

"The Black church in America was called into being as a response to adverse social circumstances and crises. It became clear immediately that there was no discontinuity between the evil in white society generally and the social evil that

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[24]Ro 8:28.

[25]Ro 8:28 (TLB).

manifested itself in the churches."[26] Traditionally, from slavery until the present, the African American church has always responded differently to hopelessness based upon its sociopolitical context and biblical stories that have shaped their view of society and God. In a book titled, *The Social Teachings of the Black Churches,* Peter Paris states, "Since religious experience is always conditioned in important ways by its sociopolitical context, it follows that significant differences in the latter imply corresponding differences in the former. Consequently, since the Black churches were racially segregated from their white counterparts, it should not be surprising to discover the reflection of that reality in the religion of Blacks as well as in that of whites."[27]

Walter Brueggeman, one of the leading scholars in the Hebrew Scriptures makes a hypothetical statement in his book *The Prophetic Imagination*, "The task of prophetic ministry is to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us."[28] This statement is critical to affecting positive change where communities have been overwhelmed by hopelessness. It becomes incumbent upon the preacher to deliver a conscious message that stimulates and gives strong impulse to the will of those who are confronted and challenged by hopeless conditions. Several examples of preachers will be given that have challenged congregations and communities to transform hopeless communities to hope and beyond.

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[26]Kelly Miller Smith, *Social Crisis Preaching* (Macon GA: Mercer University Press, 1984), 9.

[27]Peter J. Paris, *The Social Teaching of the Black Churches* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985), 10.

[28]Walter Brueggemann, The Prophetic Imagination (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1978), 13.

One of the prophetic and prominent voices of the 20th century that challenged a congregation to transform a community from hopelessness to hope and beyond was Adam Clayton Powell Jr. He became the pastor of the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, New York at the age of twenty years old. He succeeded his father, Adam Clayton Powell Sr. after he became seriously ill. Abyssinian Baptist church, founded in 1808, became the largest protestant congregation in the United States in the 1930's with a membership of upwards 10,000. "In 1938, the pastorate passed to Dr. Powell's son, Adam Clayton Powell Jr. By virtue of his huge personal popularity as Abyssinian's pastor, Adam was elected to the city's council in 1941, at the age of thirty-two. Four years later he was elected to the United States Congress, where he served fourteen terms."[29]

In the 1930's Adam Powell Jr. preached messages to his congregation that challenged them to stand up for civil rights they had been denied. He fought to improve the education system and poverty within the African American community. In 1940 Powell led a bus boycott to create more jobs for Black workers to drive busses.

Powell preached sermons that challenged the congregation to think critically and socially. In the 1960's during the height of the civil rights movement, Powell wrote a book entitled, *Keep the Faith Baby*. Within the contents of the book were sermons preached by Powell. One sermon was titled, "Black Power: A Form of Godly Power." Powell prefaced the sermon with the statement, "Black power is a constructive approach to the new life of freedom for Black people in the Great Society. Violence must play no

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[29]Samuel Dewitt Proctor, *The Substance of Things Hoped For*: A Memoir of African American Faith, (New York, NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1995), 147.

part in its fulfillment."[30] Powell emphasized in his preaching the power that would derive in the Black communities when the Black vote emerged: "Instead of lighting up the sky with Molotov cocktails, we should be lighting up the skies with the stars of millions of registered voters in 1968. Instead of throwing fire bombs, we should fire up our energies to build more black owned businesses in our communities."[31]

Throughout the discourse of Powell's sermon, "Black Power: A Form of Godly Power," Powell first emphasized that scripture provided us with the definition of godly power and how it resonates to a form of Black power. He used two passages to describe that power comes from God and is given to the Christian. The first passage was from the Old Testament, (Ps 62:11) "For God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God."[32] The second passage was from the New Testament (2 Tm 1:7) "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."[33] Powell argued that man has no power unless he is in agreement with God to come together as Black and white. "Unless man is committed to the belief that all mankind are his brothers, then he labors in vain and hypocritically in vineyards of equality."[34]

Secondly, Powell accentuated the pride that comes with being Black by using a text from the Song of Songs 1:5, "I *am* Black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem,

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[30]Adam Clayton Powell Jr., *Keep The Faith Baby* (New York, NY: Simon & Shuster, 1967), 11.

[31]Ibid.

[32]Ps 62:11.

[33]2 Tm 1:7.

[34]Powell, *Keep The Faith Baby*, 16.

as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon."[35] He uses this Old Testament passage to suggest that pride and dignity in ones' self is where power emerges.

Third, Powell suggests that Black power emerges as a form of godly power when Black people take initiative for inequities they are faced with within their own communities. "Black power is Black initiative—the arousing of Black people from fear and the sad fatigue of idleness to take the initiative by lifting themselves up and changing their lives through the mobilization of the energies of millions of Black people in Black communities all over America."[36]

Fourth, Powell placed emphasis on productivity being a characteristic of Black power. He preached that when the Black community is employed, can make a contribution to society, maintain their homes in their community and expand Black business it will be a result of equal and fair opportunity. "Find jobs for the Black jobless in our cities and the cooling breezes of employment will lower the hot temperature in our streets."[37]

Lastly, Powell emphasized that responsibility of Black people to share in the development of their own communities is a form of Godly power. Powell believed that his position as a Congressman was essential for making inroads to holding government accountable for social equality among Black people. He also stressed that each individual within the black community shared in the responsibility of becoming more involved with each facet of society that affected their lives. "It is individual responsibility—an active

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[35]Song of Songs 1:5.

[36]Powell, *Keep The Faith Baby*, 17.

[37]Ibid.

involvement by each individual in the political, educational, religious and economic life of his community."[38]

Powell's approach to preaching was to use his political power as a Congressman to gain insight of the causes of hopelessness, confront the cause and challenge those responsible as well as those whom were affected to promote change. Powell's message was to place emphasis on social justice issues by using biblical sources to convey a message of hope to the congregation.

Powell's political approach to addressing hopelessness was unique. However, prophetic preaching historically has not always found effective measures from preachers that have been politically connected. Some preachers have made a great impact on communities and cultures that have experienced hopelessness from the opposing side of political tyranny. In the 1950's there emerged a young Baptist minister from Atlanta Georgia named Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. King was a preacher who emerged as a civil rights activist when he led the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott. He became an icon for the African-American Civil Rights Movement while serving as Pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. never publicly endorsed any political party or politician and expressed: "I feel someone must remain in the position of non-alignment, so that he can look objectively at both parties and be the conscience of both—not the servant or master of either."[39]

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[38]Powell, Keep The Faith Baby, 18.

[39]Martin Luther King Jr. Carson Clayborne, Peter Holloran, Ralph E. Luker, Penny A. Russell, *Symbol of the Movement, Volume IV January 1957-December 1958*: The Papers of Martin Luther King Jr., (Berkley, CA: University of California Press), 354.

King's preaching approach to addressing hopelessness came through direct challenges in his messages that inspired people to move into action and not wait for the oppressor to have a change of heart. During the Montgomery Bus Boycott, King expressed the necessity of confronting ones oppressor from a point of non-violence yet demanding equality. In a sermon preached at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church on April 7, 1957 titled "The Birth of a New Nation," *King* stated,

> Freedom is never given to anybody, for the oppressor has you in domination because he plans to keep you there, and he never voluntarily gives up. And that is where the strong resistance comes---privileged classes never give up their privileges without strong resistance. So don't go out this morning with any illusions. Don't go back to your homes and around Montgomery thinking that the Montgomery City Commission and that all of the forces in leadership of the South will eventually work out this thing for Negroes. It's going to be worked out; it's going to roll in on wheels of inevitability. If we wait for it to work itself out, it will never be worked out."[40]

In King's famous "I've Seen the Promised Land" sermon that was delivered on April 3, 1968 at Mason Temple Church in Memphis, Tennessee the night before his death, he made reference to the fact that people whom had experienced hopelessness were responding to the Civil Rights Movement. At the early part of King's sermon that night he made this statement:

> And I see God working in this period of the twentieth century in a way that men, in some strange way, are responding. Something is happening in our world. The masses of people are rising up. And wherever they are assembled today, whether they are in Johannesburg, South Africa; Nairobi, Kenya: Accra, Ghana; New York City; Atlanta, Georgia; Jackson, Mississippi; or Memphis, Tennessee; the cry is the same: 'We want to be free.'"[41]

Dr. King stated in the same sermon, "Who is it that is supposed to articulate the longings and aspirations of the people more than the preacher? Somehow the preacher

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[40]Philip Dossick, *Martin Luther King 5 Speeches That Changed America:* (New York, NY: Editions Artisan Devereaux, LLC, 2013), e-book Loc 267 of 1191.

[41]Ibid., location 1003 of 119.

must be an Amos, and say, 'Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.' Somehow, the preacher must say with Jesus, 'The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to deal with the problems of the poor.'"[42]

Dr. Samuel Dewitt Proctor established himself as a preacher with a social justice message that challenged congregations to transform community hopelessness to hope and beyond. He became the pastor of Abyssinian Baptist Church in 1972 upon the death of Adam Clayton Powell Jr. The church needed someone with a prominent and prophetic voice to succeed the very vocal, political and prominent Adam Powell.

Proctors ministry was shaped as a young man by prominent and prophetic voices that were socially conscious of disparities and injustices that were prevalent within African American communities. "Within the Black community the career that was always open with unlimited access was the ministry. Role models like Howard Thurman, Mordecai Johnson, Benjamin Mays, and Adam Clayton Powell, Sr. were widely known. The role of the minister as a social advocate had always gripped my imagination."[43]

Dr. Proctor became pastor of the Pond Street Baptist Church in Providence, Rhode Island in 1945 where he became a prominent and prophetic voice at the age of twenty-four years old. "One night, soon after I had begun in Providence, all the Black ministers and their followers met at a big rally in the black community center. 'We're going to organize a movement here for fair employment practices in this state,' one pastor announced, 'and Reverend Proctor will lead it.'"[44]

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[42]Ibid., Location 1057-58 of 1191.

[43]Proctor, *The Substance of Things Hoped For*, 37.

[44]Ibid., 54.

Proctor began to raise money, galvanize followers with picket signs to march and he began speaking on public radio. "As a result, the Fair Employment Act was successfully passed by the Rhode Island legislature."[45]

At the same time Proctor served Pond Street Baptist Church he was also traveling to Yale Divinity School in New Haven, Connecticut on a John P. Crozer fellowship to study ethics. Proctor found it difficult to travel back and forth from Rhode Island to Connecticut so after a year of serving Pond Street Baptist Church he along with his wife moved to Boston where he pursued his Ph.D. at Boston University. From 1945 to 1972 Proctor became a prominent member of the NAACP and in 1953 became a member of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Board where he joined other ministers to travel into India and Burma to "execute the transfer of institutions from American to indigenous ownership."[46] Proctor became president of Virginia Union University in 1955 but left in 1960 to become the President of the Agriculture and Technical College of North Carolina. He also served in the Peace Corps chapter to Africa.

Proctor served as a visible, prominent and prophetic voice establishing himself among preachers across the country as a model for prophetic preaching. Proctors prophetic voice and years of social activism caused the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, New York to appoint him as the strong voice and leader to succeed Adam Clayton Powell Jr. After Powell lost his seat in congress to Charles Rangel in 1969 his health began to fail. He moved to his retreat in Bimini and failed to respond to Abyssinians' request for his return. "In 1971, the church requested that he resign, retire or

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[45]Ibid.

[46]Ibid., 64.

return. When Powell failed to respond, they declared the position of pastor vacant. Adam Powell died in April of the next year."[47] Proctor preached the funeral of Adam Clayton Powell and took on the mantle of pastoral leadership to lead the Abyssinian congregation beyond the death of their deceased leader.

While at Abyssinian Proctor was constantly encouraged to maintain the political image of the church that Powell had established. However, Proctor sought more for the congregation than to be a political hub. "My training and experience were far better applied to teaching-preaching service that to one as a New York politician who knew nothing about New York. As always, I set my priorities and my pattern of work with God's guidance."[48]

Dr. Proctor's ministry became more directed at the community of people whom he served. He became very intimately connected with the lives of his parishioners. He often made small personal gestures that established a sense of trust and felt that every person mattered. "The church filled the vacuum for Blacks in so many ways. The church supplied what was left out of their lives all week long on the Lord's Day. Those who did not register as important in the secular world found that they mattered greatly in God's house."[49]

While serving Abyssinian, one day a group of angry young men from the community came to the church and demanded an appointment with Dr. Proctor. Although they had not scheduled an appointment, Dr. Proctor met with them. They were rude and

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[47]Ibid., 148.

[48]Ibid., 149.

[49]Ibid., 157.

brash as they expressed their disdain for the $250,000 organ that was purchased for the church. Their contest was hunger in the community could have been addressed with the money used to purchase the organ. Dr. Proctor's response challenged the communal youth to look at the organ's purchase from a different perspective. He told them that if he were to give them the $250,000 to feed the community they could take one dollar and give it to 250,000 people to buy a ninety-nine cent special at McDonalds and in four hours everyone would be hungry again. "We won't have an organ, the money will be gone, and you will be back in here begging. Does that make sense?"[50]

Proctors approach toward ministry was the spiritual development of the congregation to make a difference within the community. In the instance of the young men, Proctor believed that the hard work and sacrifice of the members to purchase the organ was symbolic of their hope and a necessity to their display of Christ within their community. "The organ works for them! They can go out of here and find a job, do it well, get paid and eat on time. They are not hungry. They have an organ in their lives."[51]

Dr. Proctor's view of ministry differed from Adam Clayton Powell's. Proctors approach to ministry was from the inside out. He challenged the congregation to embrace Christian values and put their faith into action. The Christian cannot see the injustice and amorphous racism towards minorities and not be moved into ministry. "My own values require me to seek change by using Christian strategies."[52]

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[50]Ibid., 167.

[51]Ibid.

[52]Ibid., 194.

Dr. Proctor believed that no matter the time of social crisis there were lessons that could be learned from the prophets to guide our preaching. Early in his ministry his preaching was rooted in biblical sources from the lives of the prophets. "No matter where I spoke or the nature of the occasion, my authority was rooted in three principle biblical sources: the monumental eighth century prophets (Micah, Amos, and Isaiah), the teachings of Jesus, and in Paul's understanding of the power of Christ as the object of one's faith."[53] Dr. Proctor's preaching was to challenge the congregation to follow the example of Jesus and make it visible within their own community.

On May 22, 1997, Dr. Proctor died. The last sermon he preached was at the Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, IL, where Dr. Jeremiah A. Wright Jr. was the pastor. His sermon was titled "Beauty for Ashes" take from Isaiah 61:1-3:

> The Spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *them that are* bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.[54]

The Reverend Floyd Flakes is the pastor of The Greater Allen African Methodist Episcopal Church in Jamaica Queens, New York. The church was founded in 1834. "Dr. Floyd H. Flake has served as pastor since 1976."[55] The Greater Allen African Methodist Church was born out of slavery. Historically, "As the Black population moved from

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[53]Ibid., 144.

[54]*The Holy Bible: King James Version* (Bellingham WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995), Is 61:1-3; Electronic ed.

[55]Floyd H. Flake, Elaine McCollins Flake, Edwin C. Reed, *African American Church Management Handbook* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2005), intro.

plantations in the south to work at steel mills and automobile plants in the North, it continued to face injustice and discrimination. And in the absence of political leaders, African Americans continued to look to the church for hope and guidance."[56]

Dr. Flake's preaching has continued in the tradition of the prophets to imbue a message of hope that challenges the congregation to transform communities from hopelessness to hope and beyond. Dr. Flake embraces the prophetic messages of the Old Testament prophet that has had a vital significant impact particularly during the civil rights movement with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and others. However, he believes in redefining the model of prophetic preaching to fit a context that contemporizes the times in which we live. "The reality is that much of what we as a people have fought for we have gained."[57]

Greater Allen AME has three worship services on Sunday mornings that start at 6:30, 8:30 and 11:15 A.M. Dr. Flakes approach to the preaching ministry at Allen is one of personal integrity and vital importance to challenging the congregation to move beyond the emotional experience of preaching to personal transformation. "In the African American church, integrity of the worship service centers on the sermon. Thus, developing a quality message each week must be high on the pastor's list of priorities. The best sermons are those that go beyond giving people the feeling of emotional catharsis, important though that is. A sermon should challenge and empower people to do

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[56]Ibid.

[57]Ibid., 3.

something about their lives: to fix a troubled marriage, to go back to college, to save money to buy a home, to get more involved in one of the church's ministries."[58]

The prophetic preaching model of ministry at Allen, although redefined, has had a profound impact on empowering both the church membership and the community at large. The outreach ministry at Allen has been instrumental in transforming the community. Dr. Flake believes that the church growth at Allen that has soared from 1,200 in 1976 to more than 20,000 members today has been contributed to outreach as a result of preaching. "If a church determines to assess and meet the needs of its community, it almost cannot help but grow. If a church starts a school or tutoring program for children, some of those children will bring their parents to church. If a church starts programs for senior citizens, some of those seniors' sons and daughters will come to church."[59]

When Dr. Flake came to The Greater Allen AME Church community in 1976, housing, social services and education was in decline. He began to collaborate with the Department of Housing and Urban Development to build the largest senior citizen complex "under the Section 202 program of the Older Americans Act of 1976."[60] After building the senior complex, the church raised $1.5 million and began building a $4 million school. In 2004, the schools capacity was doubled to accommodate more children. After the school was built, Dr. Flake led Allen to build homes. "Soon everyone began to look to Greater Allen as the source of turning prior stories around from negative to positive. But they were not Allen stories; they were community stories."[61]

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[58]Ibid., 8.

[59]Ibid., 9

[60]Ibid., 21.

[61]Ibid., 22.

Dr. Flake has been tremendously effective in challenging the congregation at Greater Allen AME to transform community hopelessness to hope and beyond. The community has been developed through lives that were challenged and transformed within the congregation at Greater Allen AME. "Thus community development might be understood in terms of taking personal transformation to the level of organizing a positive shift in the lives of the people in a neighborhood."[62]

Challenging the congregation through preaching is critical and fundamental to transforming hopeless communities to hope and beyond, not only for the church but for a greater global impact. Thomas Miles Bennett poses critical questions in an article titled "Prophetic Preaching." Bennett asks,

- Why isn't preaching making a greater impact on twentieth-century society?
- Why isn't preaching shaping and giving more meaningful direction to revival of interests in the church and religion?
- Is the end result of preaching of so little consequence that the church is losing its battle with secular forces to determine individual and national standards of conduct?

All of this suggests that the central problem facing modern ministers is not one of empty pews, but of sanctuaries overflowing with worshippers whose standards of conduct are shaped by forces outside of the church and upon which preaching seems to exert little if any influence."[63]

Historically, social justice issues that permeated low income, crime ridden and disinherited communities placed the preacher in the position to inspire hope. The

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[62]Ibid., 88.

[63]Thomas Miles Bennett Jr., "Prophetic Preaching" *Southwestern Journal of Theology*, 3 no. 2 (April 1961): 69.

message delivered from the prophetic preacher addressed issues that congregants were confronted with on an everyday basis. The prophetic preacher, historically, placed a finger on the communal pulse of the congregant's struggles and being led by the Holy Spirit preached a message of hope that inspired positive life changing results not only congregationally but also communally.

The 21st century preacher must address the social justice concerns of the community and express the power of the Holy Spirit and the mission of Jesus Christ to restore hope. Miles Jerome Jones states, "Preaching in general, and preaching from the Black experience in particular, is the artistic expression of the interpreted relationship between the scriptural word and that which persons undergo in their daily life. The preacher creates a sermon with the expectation that such a personal statement of faith will move from utterance to action."[64] The preacher has immeasurable value in the pulpit, particularly as a change agent in communities where there is hopelessness. Wyatt Tee Walker places heavy emphasis on the value of the preacher as it relates to the African American experience in America. "The Black preacher fires the hopes and aspirations of the oppressed community and became in turn, a symbolic medicine man for all the ills that occur."[65]

Historically, prophetic biblical preaching empowered by the Holy Spirit will connect to the everyday issues of those who are confronted with hopelessness. Therefore, prophetic preaching must challenge congregations to confront social justice issues that

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[64]Miles Jerome Jones, "Preaching Papers" *The Hampton & Virginia Union Lectures* (New York, NY: Martin Luther King Fellow Press, 1985), 47.

[65]Wyatt Tee Walker, *The Soul of Black Worship: Preaching, Praying, Singing* (New York, NY: Martin Luther King Fellows Press, 1984), 7.

breed hopelessness, connect to the will of the listener and challenge the listener to affect change that brings forth hope.

Theological Foundations

Jürgen Moltmannn is a German reformed theologian born April 8, 1926 in Hamburg, Germany whose theology of hope was shaped by his experiences as a prisoner of war. Moltmannn was drafted into the German military in 1944 and surrendered to British troops in 1945. While confined in Belgium he became aware and ashamed of the atrocities and hate crimes of humanity that Nazis in Germany inflicted upon Jews in Auschwitz and Buchenwald in the concentration camps. He became deeply depressed and began to lose hope in Germany and in the character of his countrymen. While imprisoned, Moltmannn became a Christian and began to view hope in light of his suffering as a prisoner of war. His perspective of hope began to take shape whereas he believed that his own suffering was reinforced by future hope.

After Moltmann was released as a prisoner of war in 1949 he returned to Hamburg where he began formulating a theology that moved his countrymen towards repentance for the crimes of humanity against Jewish people. Moltmann studied at Gottingen University where he developed a concern for the church's relationship with society and the eschatological outcome of the church's mission.

His first major work was Theology of Hope written in 1967. The researcher views his theological perspective of hope as inverted as compared to the traditional Christian theological perspective of hope. Jürgen believes that hope can be understood from an eschatological foundation as opposed to an existentialism perspective. He believes that because of sin an existential hope of living in harmony is not possible and the Christian

hope looks toward Jesus Christ making all things new when he returns in the apocalypse to rid the world of sin and its oppressive nature. His premise is that hope is based on Christ crucified and that the resurrection of Jesus Christ brings future hope.

Moltmann's eschatological view of hope in Jesus Christ is confirmed in his statement, "The revelation of Christ cannot then merely consists in what has already happened in hidden ways being unveiled for us to see, but it must be expected in events that fulfill the promise that is given with the Christ event."[66] Moltmann further states, "Therefore, this Christianity hope expects from the future of Christ not only unveiling, but final fulfillment."[67] Moltmann's theology of hope connects ones faith to a crucified and resurrected Christ and in the hope of His return eschatologically and to view what God has done historically is an incomplete view of hope without viewing the future dimensions of Christ. Moltmann's theology of hope looks from the end of time backwards not from our existential existence towards eschatology. He believes that looking towards Christ eschatologically for a new beginning gives present consolation and hope for the future. Moltmann believes faith allows one to live in the face of oppression with a sense of consolation of the future revelation of living eternally in glory with Jesus Christ and looking to history cannot give us immediate hope. "The relationship to history as tradition has become one of reflection and has lost its immediacy. If, therefore, we would understand history and tradition, then we shall have

[66]Jurgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1967), 228.

[67]Ibid.

to find a new concept of tradition, which cancels out historical criticism and its sense of crisis in history, yet without negating or muzzling it."[68]

Moltmann believes that Christianity can never profess to live in harmony existentially against the backdrop of a sin-infected world because sins characteristic trait is hopelessness. Sin is the culprit that places humanity at conflict with God and causes world conflict and we cannot be totally at peace with God in our present existence: "Peace with God means conflict with the world, for the goad of the promised future stabs inexorably into the flesh of every unfulfilled present. If we had before our eyes only what we see, then we should cheerfully or reluctantly reconcile ourselves with things, as they happen to be."[69]

Moltmann concludes that the church should be viewed as the Exodus Church that has a specific mission in the world that sees hope as God's answer for the poor and God's answer for those who oppress the poor. "Here the Exodus Church is meant to focus attention on the reality of Christianity as that of the pilgrim people of God, as described in Hebrews: Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For we have no continuing city but we seek one to come. (Heb 13.I3f.)."[70] Moltmann's theology of hope compels the church to social action in that Christian love towards God and humanity compels the Christian towards protest against crimes of humanity. Social action as a mission of the church must bring liberation of the oppressed and the oppressor to reconciliation with God. Hope makes the Christian uncomfortable in this world and calls the Christian towards social action. "The expectation of the promised future of the

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[68]Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 81.

[69]Ibid., 21.

[70]Ibid., 304.

kingdom of God which is coming to man and the world to set them right and create life, makes us ready to expend ourselves unrestrainedly and unreservedly in love and in the work of the reconciliation of the world with God and his future."[71]

The researcher finds Moltmann's theology of hope to highlight but is not limited to four major perspectives:

1. *Eschatological Perspective of Future Revelation:* Jürgen Moltmann's theology of Hope was shaped from his experiences as a prisoner of war as well as a Calvin influence of eschatology: "In the contradiction between the word of promise and the experiential reality of suffering and death, faith takes its stand on hope and 'hastens beyond this world', said Calvin. He did not mean by this that faith flees the world, but he did mean that it strains towards the future."[72] Because of his personal life experiences he views suffering as a reinforcement of hope that does not cause one to withdraw from the world but to have hope that eternally or eschatologically we will experience future glory in the world to come. He believes that God's promises to act in the future are more important than what He has done in the past.

2. *Sin's Interruption and Corruption within the World:* Moltmann believes sin has made it impossible to live existentially in harmony with or within the world. Existentialist believes that life itself has all the meaning that life would ever need. The existential premise is that God has placed all that is needed in our *now* or in our existence to give hope and that one is responsible for their outcome of life. Moltmann's theology of hope is influenced by Calvinism which denies that God has given humanity the choice to determine existence in this world and that our future is already mapped out. Moltmann believes corruption and interruption of sin makes it impossible for coexistence in harmony within the world therefore our hope is eschatologically when all sin will be eradicated.

3. *The Hope of the Resurrection:* Moltmann's theology of hope evolved during a time in the 60's when a resurrection centered theology emerged among German theologians that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the beginning and promise of future glory in end times. The emphasis is on Christ being the first fruits of the resurrection and we are to follow. Moltmann believes that the resurrection is the foundation for Christian hope.

4. *The Mission of the Church:* Moltmann believes that hope moves the Christian towards Social Action in aiding the world to become better for the world to come. The Church of Jesus Christ bares the responsibility of calling sin to repentance and

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[71]Ibid., 337.

[72]Ibid., 19.

hope brings liberation to both the oppressed and the oppressor. Faith demands a reaction or protest against those who are oppressors to liberate the oppressed.

Reverend Jesse Louis Jackson Sr.

Reverend Jesse Louis Jackson was a student of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Reverend Jackson's theology of hope was shaped by life his life experiences of growing up poor as well as his influence by Dr. King.

Jesse Jackson was born October 8, 1941 in Greenville, South Carolina to an unwed teenage mother as a result of an affair with Noah Robinson, a thirty-three year old next door neighbor. Jackson grew up in poverty in a single parent home during a time when racial tensions were high. He experienced the racial and social inequities of that day. "In the small, Black-and-white divided town of Greenville, a young Jackson learned early the portrait of segregation. He and his mother had to sit in the back of the bus, while his Black elementary school lacked amenities the town's white elementary school had."[73]

Jackson described growing up in poverty in his 1988 presidential campaign speech entitled *Keep Hope Alive*,

> When I was a child growing up in Greenville, South Carolina my grandmamma could not afford a blanket, she didn't complain and we did not freeze. Instead she took pieces of old cloth—patches, wool, silk, gabardine, Crocker sack—only patches, barely good enough to wipe off your shoes with. But they didn't stay that way very long. With sturdy hands and a strong cord, she sewed them together into a quilt, a thing of beauty and power and culture."[74]

His theology of hope was formulated in his formative years as a result of living in poverty but not in despair:

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[73]Jesse Jackson, Biography, http://www.biography.com/people/jesse-jackson-9351181, (accessed February 2011).

[74]Frontline, "Address By Rev. Jesse Louis Jackson, http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages /frontline /jesse/speeches/jesse88speech.html (accessed February 2011).

> But don't despair. Be as wise as my grandmamma. Pull the patches and the pieces together, bound by a common thread. When we form a great quilt of unity and common ground, we'll have the power to bring about health care and housing and jobs and education and hope to our Nation."[75]

Upon graduating from college, Reverend Jackson went to Selma, Alabama to march with Dr. King and to work with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. In 1967 Reverend Jackson's commitment to social justice inspired Dr. King to appoint him as the director of Operation Breadbasket in Chicago, Illinois. Operation Breadbasket was created to address hopelessness and improve economic conditions in impoverished communities across the United States. Jackson made an immediate impact in Chicago. "Breadbasket targeted five businesses in the dairy industry. While three companies negotiated to add Black jobs immediately, two complied only after boycotts: Chicago Breadbasket went on to target Pepsi and Coca Cola bottlers, and then supermarket chains; winning 2,000 new jobs worth $15 million a year in new income to the Black community in the first fifteen months of its operation."[76]

After the death of Dr. King in 1968 Jackson committed to continuing the legacy of Dr. King's Poor Peoples Campaign. As Jackson stood before a crowd of people one day that were poor with no means of helping them he recalled, "They were the most rejected, the most impoverished, the most needy. I would look in people's faces; they were looking to me to give them something. I had no more food to give them. I did not even have a bus ticket to get home. I couldn't offer them any material."[77] It was at that

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[75]Ibid.

[76]Operation Breadbasket, http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/encyclopedia/ (accessed February 2012).

[77]Huff Post, "Black Voices," http://www.bvblackspin.com/2011/06/13/jessejacksons (accessed February 2012).

point that Jackson proclaimed the words that could be heard every Saturday morning on Chicago radio station WVON, "I am somebody. I may be poor but I am somebody. Protect me. Respect me. Never neglect me. I am God's child. Down with dope! Up with hope!"[78] Jackson stated after these words were born, "Where there is life there is hope, and where there is hope there is possibility."[79]

This statement can capsulize Jackson's theology of hope. His theological concept concerning hope belief is hope is attainable as long as one lived; even though they may never attain it, the possibilities are there. "Wherever you are tonight, you can make it. Hold your head high, stick your chest out. You can make it. It gets dark sometimes, but the morning comes. Don't you surrender. Suffering breeds character, character breeds faith. In the end, faith will not disappoint."[80]

After the death of Dr. King, SCLC's new leader Reverend Ralph Abernathy and Jackson did not see eye to eye on certain issues concerning SCLC, and tension between the two emerged that caused Jackson to resign from SCLC in 1971. However, the decision to leave SCLC gave Jackson the opportunity to create his own economic program that he called Operation PUSH (People United to Serve Humanity).

Reverend Jackson's approach as a preacher to address hopelessness differed from Dr. King's. While King remained estranged from preaching from a political perspective and stressed non-alignment, Jackson became much more involved in the political movement. Operation Push created a political pulpit for Jackson to launch his own

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[78]Ibid.

[79]Ibid.

[80]Frontline, "Address By The Reverend Jesse Louis Jackson http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/jesse/speeches/jesse88speech.html (accessed February 2012).

political career. In 1984 Jackson created the National Rainbow Coalition that would voice the rights of African Americans, women and homosexuals. In the same year Reverend Jackson would become the second African American to run for President of the United States. Shirley Chisholm ran for president in 1972. Jackson would come in third place in the democratic primaries. In 1988 Jackson ran and lost again for the U.S. presidency a second time with the campaign slogan *Keep Hope Alive*. He would later combine the National Rainbow Coalition to Operation Push to form Rainbow/PUSH.

Reverend Jesse Jackson's theology of hope can be defined but not limited to the following aspects:

1. *The Availability of Hope:* Jackson believes that hope is alive and available to all people: "As a testament to the struggles of those who have gone before; as a legacy for those who will come after; as a tribute to the endurance, the patience, the courage of our forefathers and mothers; as an assurance that their prayers are being answered, that their work has not been in vain, and, that hope is eternal, tomorrow night my name will go into nomination for the Presidency of the United States of America."[81] Jackson's theology of hope makes hope available to those who are in hopelessness through channels of consistent persistence in the areas of prayer and faith.

2. *The Common Ground of Hope:* Similar to Moltmann, Jackson's theology of hope challenged both the oppressor and the oppressed to a common ground of liberation. Hope is a meeting ground where we share our commonalities for the purpose of overcoming our differences. "Common ground. Think of Jerusalem, the intersection where many trails met. A small village that became the birthplace for three great religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Why was this village so blessed? Because it provided a crossroads where different people met, different cultures, different civilizations could meet and find common ground. When people come together, flowers always flourish—the air is rich with the aroma of a new spring."[82] Jackson believes, "Progress will not come through boundless liberalism nor static conservatism, but at the critical mass of mutual survival—not

[81]American Rhetoric, Top 100 Speeches, "Jesse Jackson 1988 Democratic National Convention Address," http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/jessejackson1988dnc.htm (access March 2012).

[82]Ibid.

at boundless liberalism nor static conservatism, but at the critical mass of mutual survival. It takes two wings to fly. Whether you're a hawk or a dove, you're just a bird living in the same environment, in the same world."[83]

3. *The Security of Hope:* Finally, Jackson's theology of hope contends that our steadfast hope in the face of hopelessness is what secures our future. "You must never stop dreaming. Face reality, yes, but don't stop with the way things are. Dream of things as they ought to be. Dream. Face pain, but love, hope, faith and dreams will help you rise above the pain. Use hope and imagination as weapons of survival and progress, but you keep on dreaming, young America. Dream of peace. Peace is rational and reasonable. War is irrationable [sic] in this age, and unwinnable."[84] "And then for our children. Young America, hold your head high now. We can win. We must not lose you to drugs and violence, premature pregnancy, suicide, cynicism, pessimism and despair. We can win. Wherever you are tonight, I challenge you to hope and to dream. Don't submerge your dreams. Exercise above all else, even on drugs, dream of the day you are drug free. Even in the gutter, dream of the day that you will be up on your feet again."[85] Jackson's theology of hope brings hope to the hopeless and empowers hopelessness to move beyond hope as stated in the closing lines of his 1988 Presidential speech: "Keep hope alive. Keep hope alive! Keep hope alive! On tomorrow night and beyond, keep hope alive!"[86]

The Researcher's Theology of Hope

The researcher finds a common thread with both Moltmann and Jackson. Life experiences serve as a window in which hope can be perceived, embraced and used as a tool that empowers those in hopelessness to move to hope and beyond. Hope can be perceived in recognizing God's activity in present hopelessness. Hope seen from an eschatological perspective is pragmatic to contemporary theologians that have complicated hope as seen from traditional perspectives. The eschatological perspective of future existence makes God accountable to the process of time. Hope viewed from a

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[83]Ibid.

[84]Ibid.

[85]Ibid.

[86]Ibid.

future perspective diminishes the sovereignty of God and counters providence as inconclusive in the activities of future events. This places God in a position as being hopeful as well. God stands separate from time and cannot be relegated to a suspicious ledger in historical or future events. His sovereignty and providence gives Him authority, knowledge and activity in time.

There is immediate hope from God that does not eliminate or diminish desire of our eschatological interpretation but gives present assurance in our existential being. In Psalm 42, the psalmist cries out in hopelessness and is given relief and finds the answer from within.[5] Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and *why* art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him *for* the help of his countenance.[87] Hope is available to those who are hopeless as seen throughout biblical history. God came into history on the side of the hopeless and gave hope as seen in the account of the Israelites. Hopelessness was apparent as the Israel suffered under Egyptian rule. Hope became apparent when Moses's love for God moved him into social action, which resulted in the Israelites being freed from bondage. The forty-year trek in the wilderness was not endured with the absence of hope but was sustained by hope of reaching Canaan. Moses was not successful in moving the Israelites beyond hope but Joshua was instrumental in bringing Israel into the Promised Land. The liberation, trek in the wilderness and obtaining the Promised Land of Israel was propelled by the challenge of Moses' prophetic voice to speak truth to power. Hope was given to Israel in hopelessness that moved Israel to hope and ultimately beyond hope as they entered the Promised Land. Hope can therefore be seen as a result of recognition of God's existence and His love to

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[87]Ps 42:5.

bring justice to those who are oppressed. Hope addresses oppression, liberates and moves towards future glory with God.

In conclusion, hope in a theological context can be viewed from the following perspectives:

1. *The Sovereign Existence of God:* Hope must have an object. The theology of hope begins with affirming that God is the creator of the universe and all that pertains to our existence. Hope begins with recognizing that a divine, supreme power beyond our humanity is in control and will take control life events that attribute suffering and oppression. Until one acknowledges the Sovereign Existence of God they will never be able to recognize His active presence individually. Hope emerges from a perspective that God can intervene and disrupt events of hopelessness that occur in life. The Sovereign Existence of God assures us that He is in control and He has providentially scripted and implemented events into time from a procreation perspective that causes hope to emerge.

2. *The Love of God:* The theology of hope affirms the love of God for His creation and that the love of God does not leave one defenseless and hopeless even in suffering. God's love moves Him into action on the behalf of those who are oppressed as well as those that are the oppressor. The Love of God has always underscored the history of Israel. Throughout biblical history, cries of injustice cause the *hesed* of God; his steadfast loyalty and loving kindness to move into action as seen in the Old Testament. In the New Testament God's Love continues to overshadow His people. In Matthew 9:35, Jesus was moved with loving compassion as result of people who wandered hopelessly. God's love seeks to deliver His creation from hopelessness that sin asserts into the lives of the oppressed or the oppressor.

3. *The Providence of God:* The Love of God moves into action and one must assert His Sovereignty will never allow those whom He loves to be left defenseless. Further to be considered is the Providence of God that assures that God sees beforehand end time events. God's Providence involves His activity in creation. God's Providence is depicted from the fall of man in Genesis chapter 3. The researcher submits that the theology of hope emerges before the original sin but uses the original sin as a point of reference. God in His Providential plan instills hope in the lives of His people to assure them of their eschatological outcome. The researcher further contends that the death and resurrection of Christ was a part His Providential plan precreation and not an addendum. God's Providence instills the hope that every event in life synergistically has been designed by God to assure a victorious outcome. Romans 8:28, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose."[88]

[88]Ro 8:28.

4. *The Promises of God:* Hope is confirmed by promises that God has given in history and has brought to past. His faithfulness to perform what he proclaims has been asserted throughout biblical history. The promises of God provide hope not only eschatologically but existentially. Hope must be immediate to support our belief of future glory. The promises of God assure an immediate and present hope while we are amongst the living. David said in Psalm 27:13: "*I had fainted,* unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living."[89] In Psalm 46:1 David says, "God *is* our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."[90] Hope needs to be immediately applicable to ensure ones eschatology. The researcher believes there has to be some present and immediate hope in this life and hope to come in the future based on the promises of God.

5. *The Challenge of the Church:* Moltmann and Jackson's theology of hope are congruent with the researcher as it relates to the responsibility of those who consider the Christian faith; the love of God moves one towards Social Action to be intentional and strategic to bring hope to life's hopeless situations. As Jesus preached liberation, it is incumbent for the Church of Jesus Christ to continue the message of liberation that will set the captives and captor free. Hope can be instilled in both the oppressed and the oppressor. The church bares the responsibility of confronting injustices. Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter[a], and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."[91] Jesus's statement about the gates of hell not prevailing, in context, places the church on the offensive and the gates of hell on the defensive. Gates are stationary and designed to prohibit invasion. Jesus's statement places the church in motion to confront sin and to bring about liberation to those who have been held captive. Hope causes those who have hoped to bring a message of hope to those who are hopeless. Therefore, the researcher concludes that the church has a mandate to transform areas of hopelessness to hope and beyond.

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[89]Ps 27:13.

[90]Ps 46:1.

[91]Mt 16:18.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

When sermons are preached that define hope, hopelessness and the churches responsibility, there will be positive results from the congregation that serve as a catalyst to foster hope within the community. Various ministry approaches of preachers that have challenged congregations and organizations to address communities where hopelessness thrived were investigated. This model is a prototype for congregations across the country that seeks to address hopelessness in the communities where they serve. The reliability and effectiveness of this model is based upon the research at MHMBC. The following method was applied to measure the response of the congregation to preaching and to gage the response of the community as a result of the congregational involvement of MHMBC.

The methodology of the total project was broken into four phases to be examined in this chapter. The first phase consisted of the pretest and the posttest surveys. The second phase entails a five part sermon series. The third phase is a community prayer vigil and three community marches for peace. The final phase is a qualitative analysis of a focus group consisting of eleven interviews from residents of Auburn Gresham and a Chicago pastor who serves a similar ministry context.

Pre Test And Post Test

Ten contextual associates were selected from Mount Hermon Missionary Baptist Church that assisted in creating questions for the pretest and posttest surveys. The

contextual associates were diverse in age, economics, education, marital and employment backgrounds. The quantitative research method was applied to collect data for these portions of the project. The questions were created considering the diverse makeup of the congregation. Dr. Jacqueline M. Moses, Professor of Adult Studies at Trinity Christian College of Palos Illinois, critiqued the survey questions. The Likert-style five-point continuum was utilized in the pretests and posttest surveys. The surveys allowed each participant to choose from five different answers: strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree.

The first part of the pretest survey consisted of ten questions designed to measure gender, age, marital status, level of education, household income, those who lived in the Auburn Gresham (also known as Greater Grand Crossing) community, and willingness to volunteer for church outreach activities. The second part of the pretest survey consisted of ten questions given in the Likert Scale format to rate the response of how the congregation viewed church, church involvement in the community, social justice issues and effectiveness of the researcher's sermons as it relates to addressing issues of hopelessness. This method provided a clear understanding of the demographics of the congregation, congregational perception of hopelessness within the community, congregational willingness to volunteer for outreach activities and what role preaching about hope has played towards inspiring the congregation towards community transformation.

The contextual associates and MHMBC ushers distributed the pretests surveys to the congregation on Sunday, July 21, 2013 to congregants over the age of twelve years old. The researcher gave a detailed explanation before preaching the initial sermon that

the surveys distributed were to assist in the compilation of research concerning this project. The congregation was informed that a five part sermon series would begin on the same date of July 21, 2013 and conclude on August 18, 2013. To ensure that each participant remained anonymous survey participants were asked not to put their names on the survey. There were 140 surveys distributed and the contextual associates and the MHMBC ushers collected 133 surveys. From the 133 surveys collected four of the 133 surveys were left blank and 129 members became a part of the field study test group.

The posttest survey was distributed on August 18, 2013 on a Sunday morning after the final sermon from the five part series had been preached. There were 141 surveys distributed by the contextual associates and the ushers and all surveys were collected. The questions were identical to the pretest with one variance. The first question of the posttest inquired how many of the five sermons series were heard by the participant. The participant would circle a number from one to five indicating the number of sermons heard. After both pretest and posttest surveys were collected, the researcher and the contextual associates tabulated projected findings to ascertain data that revealed congregational demographics, congregational perception of community, congregational willingness to volunteer in the community, church responsibility towards community and effectiveness of sermons preached that inspired congregational response to community hopelessness. From the 141 surveys distributed and collected there were two surveys that were left blank. Therefore, 139 members became a part of the field study test group.

Sermon Series

Collaboration ensued with Dr. Joel D. Taylor, the Professional Associate for this portion of the project. Dr. Taylor's advise was to formulate a series of sermons that

defined hope, hopelessness, and the church's responsibility to serve as a catalyst to transform community hopelessness. On July 21, 2013, the researcher began a five part sermon series that concluded on August 18, 2013. The researcher prepared five sermons designed to preach each week consistently to solicit a response from the congregation to transform hopelessness within the Auburn Gresham (Greater Grand Crossing) community to hope and beyond. The sermon series was titled "My Hope Is Built" and the texts were derived from various biblical passages. The five part sermon series was developed from the researchers theological foundations as suggested by the professional associate. Each sermon represented a tier that was critical to establishing and developing the researcher's theology of hope. Each sermon presented an exegetical outline of a biblical passage that revealed people whose hopelessness was transformed to hope through preaching within a certain communal contexts. The sermons intent was to challenge the membership to become a catalyst of hope to the community through activities that inspired the residents to hope. Each week the researcher would have the sermon series title emphasized in the bulletin on a separate page, which contained the sermon's teaching design for the congregation. The sermons were as follows:

1. July 21, 2013 - *The Sovereign Existence of God – God Is in Control* taken from Exodus 3:7-14. The sermon was designed to teach the members of MHMBC that the ground floor of hope is the belief that there is a God that exists and that He is able to uphold His creation. The sermon focused on the seemingly hopeless conditions of Israel in Egyptian bondage. God revealed Himself to Moses as the I AM and that His existence and rule would not allow Israel to remain hopeless.

2. July 28, 2013 - *The Love of God – God Loves Us* taken from Romans 5:8. The sermon was designed to teach the members of MHMBC that an existing, ruling God without love does not produce hope. Hope thrives on the fact that someone in control loves us enough to respond to our hopelessness. Romans 5:8 reveals that God's love for us is so immeasurable that He made a public display of sacrificial love through His son Jesus Christ at a time when we were unlovable and unforgivable.

3. August 4, 2013 - *The Providence of God – God Is Working for Our Good* taken from Romans 8:28. The sermon was designed to teach the members of MHMBC that there are no surprises for God. We have hope in knowing that God already knows the victorious outcome for the lives of those who love Him. This message emphasized the hope in knowing God is working on our behalf.

4. August 11, 2013 - *The Promises of God – God Keeps His Word* taken from 2 Corinthians 1:20. This sermon was designed to teach the members of MHMBC that our hope is in the promises of God. Emphasis was given on the fact that God keeps His word and we find hope when we are familiar with His promises.

5. August 18, 2013 - *The Challenge of The Church – The Church Wins* taken from Matthew 16:18. This sermon was designed to inspire the members of MHMBC to transform community hopelessness. The researcher explained through the biblical text that the challenge of the church is to confront the gates of hell, which symbolizes evils that confine and contain hopeless people. In the text, Jesus defined the victory of the church as prevailing over the gates of hell. The sermon teaches congregational responsibility to confront the oppressor and bring liberation to those with no hope.

PRAYER VIGIL AND COMMUNITY PEACE MARCHES

The third week after the five-part sermon series begun, the researcher formed an impromptu prayer vigil, which was followed by three community marches. The prayer vigil took place on a Sunday, August 4, 2013 in front of the church after morning worship. The researcher's impromptu addition of the prayer vigil came as a result of a wave of community violence that occurred the same weekend. The preceding Friday, August, 2, 2013, twenty-seven year old Kevin Williams was shot to death and pronounced dead on the scene directly in front of the church building. Therefore, Sunday, August 4, 2013, after sermon three was preached, the researcher assembled the members of Mount Hermon Missionary Baptist Church outside in front of the church to be seen visibly. The goal was to allow the community to have a visual of the church praying for the community and receiving the benediction. After the benediction, the researcher

invited the membership to meet at the church Tuesday evening, August 6, 2013, at 7:00 P.M. for a community march for peace.

On Monday, August 5, 2013, forty-year old Clifton Ballantine was murdered on 80th and Normal, two blocks from the Mount Hermon Missionary Baptist Church. The next day, August 6, 2013, the members of Mount Hermon Missionary Baptist Church assembled at 7:00 P.M. at the church edifice. The researcher neglected to count the number of participants but speculates at least sixty-five members in participation. The march began at the church address, 7848 South Normal Ave., and encompassed a 1-½ mile radius of the church campus. The route was south in Normal Ave. to 81st. The march proceeded to turn east on 81st and headed to Vincennes Ave. and marched to 79th and Vincennes where a circle was formed and the congregation prayed for peace within the community. The march was joined by many of the residents of Auburn Gresham and horns were blown from motorist as a gesture of support and approval. The march proceeded towards 76th and Vincennes and turned west back towards the church campus on Normal Avenue. Prayers were offered by members of the church on the actual scene of the murders of both Kevin Williams and Clifton Ballantine. The march concluded in the sanctuary of MHMBC with a closing prayer.

The second march occurred on August 27, 2013 and was executed in the same manner. The researcher created a sign in sheet to determine how many people participated in the march and a banner was created by one of the parishioners of MHMBC with the slogan Praying For Peace To Stop The Violence. The second march was not as well attended as the initial march. The researcher attributes the lack of attendance to inadequate communication on the part of the researcher to effectively

promote church attendance for the event. The researcher created a sign in sheet for first time marchers and those who were second time marchers. There were thirty-eight participants in total, which consisted of thirteen first time marchers.

The third march occurred on September 24, 2013. The researcher coordinated a public relations team to contact the local Chicago newspaper and the local news television stations. At 6:45 P.M., a cameraman from the Chicago Channel 2 News Team met with the researcher and a brief interview was conducted as to the nature of the march. The researcher distributed two sign in sheets for those who participated in the previous two marches and for first time marchers. The march was conducted as the two previous marches and received news coverage from two local television stations and was aired on the 10:00 P.M. news on channels 9 and CLTV. The researcher saw the need to add these actions to the methodology of this project to demonstrate church support in community crisis.

FOCUS GROUP RESEARCH

Upon completion of the third community march, the researcher moved to the final process of the methodology. The qualitative research method was applied and ten people were interviewed that lived or worked within a mile radius of Mount Hermon Missionary Baptist Church. The majority of persons selected for this portion of the field study were non-members of MHMBC. The interviewees were diverse in age, gender, employment and economic status to assure a more balanced response. The researcher's interview entailed three questions to gage whether the prayer vigil and community marches given by MHMBC fostered hope within the community. The three questions were:

1. How did you feel about the community before the prayer vigil and marches?
2. Have you sensed a change in our churches involvement in the community?
3. How did it make you feel?

The researcher conducted a final interview with a Chicago South Side pastor who has a similar ministry context to weigh different ministry approaches to address community hopelessness. After completion of the field interviews the researcher would have documented data along with personal observations of community residents to determine how MHMBC could further develop strategies to address community hopelessness. The qualitative method will be critical to determining the researcher's hypothesis that sermons preached have an impact on congregational transformation of community hopelessness. The researcher interviewed the following people as a part of qualitative research:

- Beverly [redacted] - Beverly is an African American female in her mid-fifties. She lives at [redacted] South Normal Avenue in the Auburn Gresham Community but also works for the Chicago Police Department as the liaison to the CAPS Community Policing Unit. CAPS stands for Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy. Beverly has lived in the Auburn Gresham community since 1959.

- John [redacted] is an African American male who lives at [redacted] South Normal Avenue directly in front of MHMBC. John is a forty-nine year old bus driver for the Chicago Transit Authority. He has lived in Auburn Gresham for ten years.

- Susie [redacted] is an African American female in her late forties who lives at [redacted] South Eggleston. Eggleston is one block east of Normal Avenue. Susie is currently unemployed but has lived in Auburn Gresham over thirty years.

- Rico [redacted] is a thirty-one year old unemployed African American male on disability. Rico lives at [redacted] South Normal and has been a resident of the Auburn Gresham community for four years.

- Lavonda [redacted] is a twenty-four year old unemployed African American female. Lavonda lives at [redacted] South Normal.

- Ebony [redacted] is a thirty-one year old unemployed African American female. Ebony is unemployed and she resides at [redacted] South Normal.

- Ruth [redacted] is a seventy-two year old African American female who has been a resident of Auburn Gresham for fifty-two years. Ruth resides at [redacted] South Stewart. She is a retired Chicago Public School Teacher.

- Jimmy [redacted] is a thirty-year old African American male who lives at [redacted] South Throop. He is the Community/Technology Organizer of the Auburn Gresham Development Corporation. Jimmy has lived and worked within the community for thre years.

- Don [redacted] is a twenty-year old African American male who resides at [redacted] West 79th Street. Don is unemployed and has lived in the Auburn Gresham community most of his life.

- Keshaun [redacted] is a seventeen-year old African American male who lives at [redacted] South Normal. He has lived in the community for eight years. Keshaun is a senior at Kenwood Academy High School in Chicago.

- Pastor Corey Brooks: In addition to the field interviews the researcher met with Pastor Corey Brooks on December 09, 2013. The researcher has observed the ministry of Pastor Brooks and the New Beginnings Church on the South Side of Chicago. Pastor Brooks gained national recognition as *The Rooftop Pastor* for spending ninety-four days on the rooftop of an abandoned hotel across the street from his church to combat gun violence. Pastor Brooks has eulogized several young people that have succumbed to gun violence. Pastor Brooks did a march across America for *Project Hood.* This project was created to raise money for a new community center near his South side church to foster hope within the community and bring awareness to violence to the youth of the City of Chicago. The researcher was able to glean knowledge from Pastor Brook's model to combat hopelessness within the community.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE

Hopelessness is a difficult topic to measure. There are people in churches and communities that have not experienced life beyond their present living conditions. Many people are living without hope because they lack exposure to alternative life options. God calls preachers to equip congregations to bring the hopeless to the realization of hope in God.

It was important to test the hypothesis to determine if preaching could challenge a congregation to transform community hopelessness to hope and beyond. In this study the instrument utilized to measure the hypothesis were the pretest and post-test sermon series, sermon series, prayer vigil and community marches and focus group interviews. The questions for the pretest and posttest were formulated utilizing a team approach, which included the contextual associates. The researcher and the contextual associates agreed that the questions would focus on demographics, congregational awareness of community hopelessness, congregational willingness to volunteer for outreach, congregational responsibility to community and how effective were sermons preached on hope. The questions were critiqued by Dr. Jacqueline M. Moses who is a professor of Adult Studies at Trinity Christian College in Palos, Illinois.

The researcher used the quantitative method to collect data for this project. This method provided the researcher with a clear understanding of congregational perception

of church involvement and responsibility towards community hopelessness and what role preaching has played towards inspiring the congregation towards transforming community hopelessness. The first part of the pretest survey consisted ten questions that would determine age, gender, marital status, highest level of education, household income, whether the participant resided in Auburn Gresham, were there people without hope in Auburn Gresham, did the see any hope for people in Auburn Gresham and were they willing to volunteer their time for outreach ministry. The questions allowed the researcher to get a general idea of congregational demographics and congregational perception of the Auburn Gresham community.

The second part of the survey consisted of ten questions that were given applying the Likert-style five-point continuum. The survey allowed each participant to choose from five different answers: strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree. This portion of the survey allowed the researcher to determine congregational awareness of community hopelessness, congregational responsibility to the community, congregational willingness to volunteer for outreach activities and the effectiveness of the researcher's sermons.

The researcher informed the congregation on July 7, 2013 and July 14, 2013 during pastoral observations that a pretest survey on July 21, 2013 prior to the culmination of a five part sermon series titled *My Hope is Built*. The researcher also informed the congregation of the necessity of all participants being present for all five sermons.

On Sunday July 21, 2013 the pretest surveys were distributed to the congregation before the first of the five part series was preached. The researcher gave clear instructions

that the surveys would be distributed to congregants over the age of twelve-years old. To ensure that each survey participant remained anonymous survey participants were asked not to put their names on the survey. There were some people that seemed unsure of the instructions. Therefore, the researcher took time to re-emphasize what was expected during this process. The researcher became aware that there would be some persons that would complete the surveys correctly and others who would not.

There were 140 surveys distributed by the contextual associates and ushers of the church. There were 133 surveys collected by the aforementioned persons. From the 133 surveys collected four of the 133 surveys were left blank and 129 members became a part of the field study test group.

The posttest survey was distributed Sunday, August 18, 2013 after the final sermon from the five part series had been preached. There were 141 surveys distributed by the contextual associates and the ushers and all surveys were collected. The questions were identical to the pretest with one variance. The first question of the posttest inquired how many of the five sermons series were heard by the participant. The participant would circle a number from one to five indicating the number of sermons heard. Both pretest and posttest were quantitative and used together to generate data to show congregational perception of church responsibility towards community and effectiveness of sermons preached that inspired congregational response to community hopelessness139 became a part of the field study.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The findings of the pretest and posttest surveys revealed the following: MHMBC has approximately 285 persons on the church roll. The pretest was given on July 21,

2013. There were 129 people who participated in the pretest. This number represented approximately 45% of the entire congregation. Included in this number were forty-three males and eighty-six females who all included their gender in the survey. The different age groups included thirteen respondents, ages twelve-eighteen; ten respondents, ages nineteen to twenty-five; ten respondents, ages twenty-six to thirty-two 26; sixteen respondents, ages thirty-three to thirty-nine; twelve respondents, ages forty to forty-six; twenty-four respondents, ages forty-seven to fifty-three; fourteen respondents, ages fifty-four to sixty; nine respondents, ages sixty-one to sixty-seven; nineteen respondents, ages sixty-eight and older. Two respondents did not check their age on the survey.

The same questionnaire was given as posttest with the addendum of an additional question inquiring how many of the five sermons that were preached. The posttest was given on August 18, 2013 after the final sermon. The weather was pleasant and there were more members present on this day. There were 139 people who participated in the posttest. This number represented approximately 49% of the entire congregation. Included in this number were thirty-nine males and 100 females who all included their gender in the survey. The different age groups included thirteen respondents, ages twenty to eighteen; thirteen respondents, ages nineteen to twenty-five; nine respondents, age twenty-six to thirty-two; twelve respondents, ages thirty-three; sixteen respondents, ages forty to forty-six; nineteen respondents, ages forty-seven to fifty-three; seventeen respondents, ages fifty-four to sixty; ten respondents, ages sixty-one to sixty-seven; twenty-two respondents age sixty-eight and older. Eight respondents did not check their age on the survey.

SURVEY RESULTS

We will now focus on some of the survey questions and look at some of the percentages of change from the pretest followed by the treatment of the sermons reflected in the posttest. The questions are seven through ten in Part 1 of the survey and questions one through ten in Part 2 of the survey.

7. Do you live in the Auburn Gresham Community?

In the pretest there were forty-seven persons who reside in Auburn Gresham and seventy-six that reside outside of the church community. Six persons did not respond to question 6. In the posttest there were forty-four persons that responded to living in the community and eighty-eight that responded to living outside of the community. Seven persons did not respond to question 6. Therefore, people who live in the community would have a greater interest in addressing community hopelessness.

8. There are some people without hope living in the Auburn Gresham community?

In the pretest there were 109 respondents who agreed that there were some people living without hope in Auburn Gresham and five respondents said no. Fifteen people did not respond to question 7. In the posttest there were 107 respondents that answered yes and seventeen that answered no. Again, there were fifteen persons that did not respond. The results of the survey revealed that 96% agreed there were people living without hope in Auburn Gresham and 4% disagreed in the pretest. In the posttest 86% agreed that people were living without hope in Auburn Gresham and 14% disagreed. There was a 10% decrease in the posttest of agreed respondents to the question and 10% increase to the disagreed respondents. The decrease between the pretest and posttests can be attributed to the sermons preached. Although the decrease was small the researcher believes that the membership in some ways became cognizant of their responsibility to become a catalyst of hope. Therefore, people who appeared hopeless could obtain the realization of hope through MHMBC members.

9. There is hope for people living in Auburn Gresham?

The pretest survey revealed that 99% said that there was hope for people living in Auburn Gresham. Whereas the posttest revealed that only 86% said there was hope for people living in Auburn Gresham. The researcher attributes this decrease in the opinion of the membership to the wave of violence that occurred after the initial sermon. There were two homicides in the community that occurred after the pretest survey that possibly could have caused feelings of apathy to surface.

10. I am willing to volunteer in outreach activities at MHMBC?

In the pretest 96% were willing to volunteer their time and 4% of the congregation agreed not to volunteer their time. The posttests revealed that 93% would volunteer and 7% agreed not to volunteer their time. The results yield the number of people willing to volunteer decreased by 3%.

Part 2 Likert - Scale

1. The Church has a responsibility to teach the community about having hope in God.

The pretest revealed that 84.5% of the membership strongly agreed and 14.5% agreed and 1% had no opinion to this statement. The posttest revealed that 85.4% strongly agreed and 14.6% agreed with this statement. There number who strongly agreed increased 0.9%. There was a slight increase in numbers. The small increase can be attributed to the familiarity of sermons preached over the years about church responsibility to the community.

2. The MHMBC congregation has the responsibility to help change the mindset of people who are hopeless in the Auburn Gresham community.

The pretest revealed 69.2% strongly agreed, 29.2% agreed, 0.8% disagreed and 0.8% strongly disagreed. The posttests revealed that 67.5% strongly agreed, 30.9% agreed, and 1.6% had no opinion. The number of strongly agreed decreased by 1.7% and those who agreed increased by 1.7%. The findings indicate no significant change from the pretests and posttests surveys. The results were not what was expected. However, it has become clear that challenging a congregation to transform community hopelessness begins with transforming the minds of the congregation.

3. The men of MHMBC should serve as role models for the young men in the Auburn Gresham community.

The pretest revealed 71.9% strongly agreed, 24.0% agreed, 3.3% had no opinion and 0.8% strongly disagreed. The posttest revealed 79.2% strongly agreed, 17.5% agreed, and 3.3% had no opinion. The findings indicate that the number of people that strongly agreed increased by 7.9%The researcher attributes this increase to sermons preached and indicates that men in the congregation understand the need to be mentors and role models in the community.

4. The women of MHMBC should serve as role models for the young women in Auburn Gresham.

   The pretest revealed 72.4% strongly agreed, 23.3% agreed, 3.4% had no opinion and 0.9% strongly disagreed. The posttest revealed 79.0% strongly agreed, 19.3% agreed, 1.7% had no opinion. The findings indicate that the number of people that strongly agreed increased by 6.6%. This indicates the understanding that women in the congregation have to serve as role models for young women in the community.

5. Christian morals and values should be modeled through the various outreach activities at MHMBC.

   The pretest revealed that 70.3% strongly agree, 27.1% agree, 1.7% had no opinion and 0.9% disagreed. The posttest revealed that 74.6% strongly agreed, 23.8% agreed, 0.8% had no opinion and 0.8% disagreed. The findings indicate the numbers that strongly agree increase by 4.3%. The increase indicates awareness of congregational responsibility and accountability to provide outreach activities to emphasize Christian life values and morality.

6. The church should be concerned with social justice issues that affect the community (ex. violent crimes, poverty, drug activity, and unemployment and education).

   The pretest revealed that 72.9% strongly agreed, 22.0% agreed, 4.2% had no opinion and 0.9% disagreed. The posttest revealed 77.7% strongly agreed, 17.4% agreed, 4.1% had no opinion, and 0.8% strongly disagreed. The findings indicate the numbers that strongly agree increased by 4.8%. This indicates an increase in social consciousness.

7. MHMBC should offer tutoring to the youth in the Auburn Gresham community.

   The pretest revealed 73.0% strongly agreed, 24.4% agreed, and 2.6% had no opinion. The posttest revealed 70.3% strongly agreed, 27.1% agreed, 1.7% had no opinion and 0.9% disagreed. The findings indicate the numbers that strongly agree decreased by 2.7% and those who agreed increased by 2.7%. This indicates a necessity to educate the congregation on the need for tutorial services in the community.

8. MHMBC should have recreational activities that involve the Auburn Gresham community (ex. Community prayer vigils, community clean up week, job seminars, and health fairs).

   The pretest revealed 72.4% strongly agreed, 25.0% agreed, and 2.6% had no opinion. The posttest revealed 68.2% strongly agreed, 25.5% agreed, 5.4% had no opinion and 0.9% disagreed. The findings indicate the numbers of strongly agree decreased by 4.2%. This indicated that the need to be visibly connected to the community must be re-emphasized in future ministry objectives.

9. Sermons by Pastor Moses have positively changed how I view hopelessness.

   The pretest revealed 70.6% strongly agree, 26.0% agree, and 3.4% had no opinion. The posttest revealed 78.9% strongly agree, 17.9% agree, 2.4% had no opinion and 0.8% disagreed. The findings indicate the numbers that strongly agree increased by 8.3%. The increase indicates that the sermon series has effectively changed views about hopelessness.

10. Sermons by Pastor Moses have challenged me to help those who are hopeless.

    The pretest revealed 70.0% strongly agrees, 27.4% agreed, and 2.6% had no opinion. The posttest revealed 74.2% strongly agreed, 21.0% agreed and 4.8% had no opinion. The numbers that strongly agree increased by 4.2%. This indicates that the sermon series has yielded small but not insignificant results.

MY HOPE IS BUILT SERMON SERIES

Five sermons were prepared to challenge the congregation of Mount Hermon to become socially active within the community for the purpose of inspiring hope. The sermons were preached from Exodus, Romans, 2 Corinthians and Matthew. These sermons were designed to solicit a response from the congregation. Each sermon challenged the congregation to become a visible means of hope to the community. The first sermon was preached on July 21, 2013. The sermon was titled "The Sovereign Existence of God – God Is In Control," from Exodus 3:7-14. The sermon was designed to teach the members of Mount Hermon that the ground floor of hope believes that there is a God that exists and that He is able to uphold His creation. The sermon focused on the seemingly hopeless conditions of Israel in Egyptian bondage and how God revealed Himself to Moses as the I AM and that His existence and rule would not allow Israel to remain hopeless.

The second sermon preached was "The Love of God – God Loves Us," from Romans 5:8. The sermon was designed to teach the members of Mount Hermon that an

existing, ruling God without love does not produce hope. Hope thrives on the fact that someone in control loves me enough to respond to my hopelessness. Romans 5:8 reveals that God's love for us is so immeasurable that He made a public display of sacrifice love through His son Jesus Christ at a time when we were unlovable and unforgivable.

The third sermon preached was "The Providence of God – God Is Working for Our Good?" from Romans 8:28. The sermon was designed to teach the members of Mount Hermon that are no surprises for God. We have hope in knowing that God already knows the victorious outcome for the lives of those who love Him. This message emphasized the hope in knowing God is working on our behalf.

The fourth sermon preached was "The Promises of God—God Keeps His Word," from 2 Corinthians 1:20. This sermon was designed to teach the members of Mount Hermon that our hope is in the promises of God. Emphasis was given on the fact that God keeps His word and we find hope when we are familiar with His promises.

The fifth and final sermon preached was "The Challenge of The Church—The Church Wins," from Matthew 16:18. This sermon was designed to teach the members of Mount Hermon the challenge of the church is to confront the social evils that plaque our community and Jesus has already guaranteed the victory of the church. The sermon teaches that those with hope are challenged to inspire the hope of our victory through Christ Jesus to those with no hope.

During the last sermon, reference was made to *the gates of hell* and our responsibility to confront the gates. As we marched through the neighborhood for our final march we came upon some young men with gang affiliations who were selling drugs on the corner. One of the members said, "Pastor there goes the gates." His

reference to *the gates* was an indication that the sermon series was vital to the project and gave the listener a biblical application that provided a lens to apply ministry within the Auburn Gresham context.

PRAYER VIGIL AND COMMUNITY PEACE MARCHES

The third week after the five part series begun, an impromptu prayer vigil was formed, which was followed by three community marches. The prayer vigil took place on a Sunday, August 4, 2013 in front of the church after morning worship. The impromptu addition of the prayer vigil came as a result of a wave of community violence that occurred the same weekend. The preceding Friday, August, 2, 2013, twenty-seven year old Kevin Williams was shot to death and pronounced dead on the scene directly in front of the church building. Therefore, after sermon four was preached, members of Mount Hermon Missionary Baptist Church were encouraged to assemble outside in front of the church to be seen visibly by the community praying for the community and receiving the benediction. After the benediction, an invitation was extended to the membership to meet at the church on Tuesday, August 6, 2013 for a community march for peace.

On Monday, August 5, 2013, forty-year old Clifton Ballantine was murdered on 80th and Normal, two blocks from the Mount Hermon Missionary Baptist Church. The next day, August 6, 2013, the members of Mount Hermon Missionary Baptist Church assembled at 7:00 P.M. There were approximately sixty-five members in participation. The march encompassed a 1-½ mile radius of the church building. The route was south in Normal Ave. to 81st. The march proceeded to turn east on 81st and headed to Vincennes Ave. and marched to 79th and Vincennes where a circle was formed and the congregation prayed. The march was joined by many of the residents of Auburn Gresham and horns

were blown from motorist as a gesture of approval. The march proceeded towards 76th and Vincennes and turned west back towards the church campus on Normal Avenue. Prayers were offered by members of the church on the actual scene of the murders of both Kevin Williams and Clifton Ballantine. The march concluded in the sanctuary of Mount Hermon Missionary Baptist Church with a final prayer.

The second march occurred on August 27, 2013 and was executed in the same manner. The researcher created a sign in sheet to determine how many people participated in the march and a banner was created by one of the parishioners of Mount Hermon Missionary Baptist Church with the slogan Praying For Peace To Stop The Violence. The second march was not as well attended as the initial march. The lack of attendance was attributed to inadequate communication on the part of the researcher to effectively promote church attendance for the event. A sign-in sheet was created for first time marchers and those who were second time marchers. There were thirty-eight participants in total, which consisted of thirteen first time marchers.

The third march occurred on September 24, 2013. The researcher coordinated a public relations team to contact the local Chicago newspaper and the local news television stations. At 6:45 P.M., a cameraman from Channel 2 conducted a brief interview as to the nature of the march. Two sign-in sheets were distributed for those who participated in the previous two marches and for first time marchers. The march was conducted as the two previous marches and received news coverage from two local television stations and was aired on the 10:00 P.M. News on Channels 9 and CLTV.

The prayer vigil and marches were essential to the measurement of the project. It allowed the researcher to create a visual for the community to observe the congregation's

interaction within the community. The vigil and marches also became the tools needed to provide questions for the focus group.

FOCUS GROUP

On various dates from November 13, 2013 to December 9, 2013 eleven field interviews were conducted. Persons selected for the field interviews were diverse in gender, age, occupation, and economic backgrounds. These persons reside, are employed, or had a contextual connection to the Auburn Gresham community and the overall project. The field study interviewee may not have witnessed the prayer vigil or community marches but had to have knowledge of those activities. The following three questions were as:

1. How did you feel before the prayer vigil and marches?
2. Have you sensed a change in our churches involvement in the community?
3. How did it make you feel?

The qualitative method was applied to derive data through the narrative words described from the focus group interviews. The focus group interviews became the proverbial lynchpin to the overall project allowing each person to articulate their response to MHMBC efforts to transform community hopelessness to hope and beyond

When asked, *"How did you feel before the prayer vigil and community marches?"* Each participant within the focus group expressed frustration because of the unbroken continuity of violence within the community. The overall response was a collective sense of apathy that the community had been inundated with a wave of violent crimes. All participants agreed that there were portions of Auburn Gresham that was safer than others.

When asked, *"Have you sensed a change in our churches involvement in the community?"* It became clear that every interview yielded a similar theme that MHMBC cares about the community. Each participant expressed personal stories of how MHMBC has been an anchor institution within Auburn Gresham. Four of the participants made reference to lowered criminal activity on Normal Avenue because of the presence of the church. Each participant verbally expressed their appreciation for MHMBC increased presence within the Auburn Gresham community.

When asked, "How did it make you feel?" Each participant affirmed that MHMBC made him or her feel as though the church cared. The interviews were critical to understanding how the community viewed MHMBC. It gave a more defined picture of what impact MHMBC has had on the Auburn Gresham community (See interviews in Appendix B).

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTIONS, SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Reflections

The journey to complete this project began with the assumption that preaching could serve as a catalyst to move congregations towards transforming hopeless communities. Having been born in the community where MHMBC is located, the effects of people that have been marginalized by systemic oppression has been experienced firsthand. Systemic oppression has meant persons that have been targeted by institutionalisms for failure.

From the time of my youth to the completion of this project relationships have been fostered with persons within the Auburn Gresham community that have been directly affected by poverty, unemployment, violent crimes, narcotics and other social ills. Although our family tried to overcome many obstacles to live a middle-class way of life, the formative years would not allow me to escape the struggles of many lower income families within the Auburn Gresham community.

Reflecting on those formative years has being critical to developing an overall view of the world. The effect of my father's suffering from physical illness and later death from complications from depression, alcoholism, and periodic erratic violent behavior triggered many suppressed negative emotions that surfaced in adolescence and early adult life.

However, my mother continuously kept me exposed to alternative means of life that eradicated hopelessness. The call to ministry allowed me to relate to people who experienced hopelessness and to challenge them to move to hope.

In reflection, every facet of my father's illness and ultimate death prepared me to pastor the MHMBC congregation and serve the Auburn Gresham community. While engaging the methodology for the total project, the theme of violence surfaced as a contributor to hopelessness. The wave of violent crimes within the timeframe of this project required addressing violence through a prayer vigil and marches for peace. Experiences of witnessing violent behavior and working as a police officer in the cities most violent neighborhoods should have been included within the presupposition of this project. The results extrapolated from this project compel further research addressing violence within the Auburn Gresham community.

Summary

This project was initiated to determine if preaching would challenge the congregation at the MHMBC to transform community hopelessness to hope and beyond. Contextual associates consisting of ten MHMBC members, diverse in age, gender, education, household incomes, were selected to formulate a pretest and posttest survey for the congregation. Both surveys were identical in the questions submitted with the exception of one question added to the posttest inquiring the number of sermons heard in a five part sermon series on hope. The surveys were constructed to determine four essential topics; demographics of the congregation, congregational perception of hopelessness within the community, congregational willingness to volunteer for outreach activities and what role preaching about hope has played towards inspiring the

congregation towards community transformation. Before the survey was implemented it was evaluated and critiqued by Dr. Jacqueline M. Moses, professor of Adult Studies at Trinity Christian College in Palos, Illinois.

The five part sermon series, My Hope is Built, was preached to define hope, hopelessness and congregational responsibility to transform community hopelessness to hope and beyond. The weekend prior to preaching sermon three a wave of violence occurred within the church community causing the researcher to incorporate a prayer vigil and three community marches to address the violence. Finally, a focus group of eleven persons allowed the researcher to gage the community perception of MHMBC.

The field study was implemented to measure the effectiveness of the total project. The researcher discovered in the execution of the surveys that many respondents were perhaps bias in their response to the questions and some were obstinate in their participation. It was also determined that many of the questions were left blank perhaps of a feeling of being rushed to complete the survey or not being able to comprehend the questions. There were three areas in part one that showed decrease in perceptions of the respondents in questions 8, 9 and 10. The posttest surveys given at the end of the five part sermon series indicated a 10% decrease in the congregation's perception of people who were hopeless in the Auburn Gresham community. The surveys indicated another 13% decrease of congregational perception when asked if there was hope for people in the Auburn Gresham community. The survey also yielded a 3% decrease in members willing to volunteer for outreach activities to address community hopelessness.

In part 2 of the survey there was a 1.7% decrease in question #2 among respondents when asked if the congregation had the responsibility to change the mindset

of those who were hopeless in the Auburn Gresham community. There was a final 2.7% decrease from respondents in question #7 when asked if the church should offer after school tutorial services for children in Auburn Gresham. It was determined that areas where respondents felt the responsibilities were too much individually the answers decreased. However, when questions were answered concerning the church as a group or separated into male and female responsibilities the numbers increased.

In every other question given concerning community activities that could be sponsored by the financial coffers of the church the responses went up. There was a significant increase in respondents when asked about the churches responsibility and involvement with social justice issues. Finally, there were significant increases after the sermon series on congregational awareness of hopelessness and being challenged to address hopelessness. The surveys showed increases in all pertinent areas with the exception of questions 7, 8, and 9 in part 1 of the survey and questions 2 and 7 in part 2 of the questionnaire. The final two questions were essential to determine if preaching had the presupposed effect on the congregation. Question #9 yielded an 8.3% increase with those who strongly agreed that the researcher's sermons changed how they viewed hopelessness. This was the largest increase out of all of the questions. Question #10 yielded a 4.3% increase of those who strongly agreed that the researcher's sermons have challenged them to help those who are hopeless.

The eleven field interviews became the cornerstone of the project. The interviews determined the community perception of congregational concerns for issues that fostered hopelessness. It was determined through these interviews that the community viewed MHMBC as an agent of hope and an anchoring institution that has merited the respect of

the community. The fact that MHMBC has maintained visibility within the community, i.e., prayer vigils, marches, food giveaway, after school programs and so forth, have proven to the community that the congregation cares.

Resistance was encountered in the field interview portion of this project. It was the intent to interview some of the young men that the community felt responsible for committing various crimes. However, it was discovered that many of the young men that were active in creating the social ills felt the church was intruding on their activities. In hindsight, a different strategy should have been used to conduct these interviews. One option would have been to allow members who were within that age group and had relationships with those persons conduct the interview. This method would have removed the authoritative figure of being interviewed by the pastor.

As a result of this project and its findings, it is recommendation for congregations that seek to apply this model to be cognizant of the following findings:

1. Prophetic preaching is essential to awaken the consciousness of the congregation concerning community hopelessness.

2. Preaching alone will not challenge the congregation to transform community hopelessness. There must be creative, strategic and intentional community appearances by the congregation when the community is faced with crisis.

3. The community must sense a concern from the congregation that they are willing to help transform hopelessness.

4. Congregations must partner with other anchoring community institutions to collaborate strategies to provide alternative lifestyles for those who experience hopelessness. Exposure is critical to transforming hopelessness.

The areas where MHMBC has not been effective in transforming community hopelessness to hope and beyond are:

- The issue of economics. There simply are not enough finances to maintain ministry obligations to the community.
- Volunteer shortages within the congregation can become an issue when members are not willing to volunteer their time.
- Divisions between anchoring community service organization, politicians and other churches create an environment of competition.
- Media connections provide congregations the opportunity to garner support from outside sources.

Conclusion

The process to complete this project has opened up another avenue of thinking for the MHMBC congregation. The journey has encouraged ministry to be viewed from a holistic approach. Information learned, techniques applied and data retrieved has encouraged a new journey in discovering alternative ways to better serve the MHMBC congregation.

The three years invested in the compilation of this research has stretched me beyond imagination. The Doctor of Ministry Program at United Theological Seminary has introduced me to academic constituents that have developed into what is desired to be life long, nurturing relationships.

The members of MHMBC through this process have become aware of the importance of obtaining higher education and applying what you have gleaned academically to furthering the advancement of the Kingdom of God.

This project model will be used as a launching pad to do more academic writing, provide workshops and consultation on prophetic preaching. Finally, I am above all thankful to God for allowing me to bring to the Church of Jesus Christ this model of ministry.

APPENDIX A

SERMON SERIES

OUR HOPE IS BUILT

SERMON 1: THE SOVEREIGN EXISTENCE OF GOD – GOD IS IN CONTROL

EXODUS 3:7-14

When we take a close look at the community in which we worship, we see hopelessness. It appears as though this community is out of control. According to a more recent report from the City of Chicago Department of Family Support Services there are 32,602 people that live in Auburn Gresham. 96.9% are African American, 0.6% is Caucasian, 1.2% are Hispanic, 0.1% are Asian and 1.0% are categorized as other. The total civilian labor force is 14,740. There are 11,949 people employed and 2,791 people unemployed with an unemployment rate of 18.9%. The violent crime rate is 46.79%.[1]

There are people walking around in the Auburn Gresham community with no jobs. There are young men on the corners with sagging pants selling drugs and the police seem to look in the other direction. It seems as though there has been a government design to foster hopelessness in our community and maintain the status quo of social injustices that we see every day. The City of Chicago's Mayor, Rahm Emmanuel, does not seem to care for the poor. He does not seem to like the poor. He does not seem to care the poor live or dies. He recently closed over 50 schools in poor and sparse communities that forced children to walk through rival gang territory to get to another school. Economic funds have been disinvested from our community and invested in economic land development in wealthy communities. Young women are behaving as rash and as violent as the young men who fight one another and do drive by shootings. There seems to be a plan to control poor communities by sustaining poverty, drugs, killing our young

[1]City of Chicago Department of Family and Support Services, Demographic Profile of Community Area 69. Greater Grand Crossing (December, 2010).

black men, and disrupting the family structure by sending black men to the penitentiary. However, the message today is tailored to teach us that God does exist, we are His people and therefore we must hold on to hope knowing that God is in control. God hears our cries. I want us to look at a passage in the Old Testament that teaches us that our hope is in the Sovereign Existence of God and that God is in control.

Numbers chapter 3 teaches us about His Sovereign Existence. God's people, the Israelites, found themselves in a community that appeared out of control. They were placed in slavery and lived in deplorable conditions as slaves under a tyrant king named Pharaoh. Pharaoh didn't like God's people. He didn't care for God's people. He didn't care how they lived or even if they lived. He wanted to control their lives because they began to multiply greatly and his fear was that he would lose control. The government, under Pharaoh, devised a plan to control the Israelites. They forced them into slavery under cruel living conditions. They were mistreated and victims of social injustices but God heard their cries. The cries of God's people for mercy continually rose toward heaven. God understood their predicament and took control of the situation. He appeared in a burning bush to an 80-year-old shepherd with nothing but a staff in his hands and a stutter on his lips named Moses.

Moses was tending a flock of sheep when an angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush. Moses observed the bush and realized that although the bush was on fire it was not burning. When God saw that he had Moses' attention He called him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" Moses said, "Here I am." God told Moses to come no closer and to take of his sandals for the place that he was standing on was holy ground.

God said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Out of fear Moses hid his face. God told Moses that He had seen the oppression and heard the cries of His people and that He would send him to deliver His people out of Egypt. Moses said, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" God said, "I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain."

Moses said, "Behold, *when* I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, what *is* his name? What shall I say unto them? God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

The "I Am that I Am" is a powerful statement. Moses wanted to know what authority he would approach Pharaoh under. Pharaoh seemed to be the one orchestrating the misery of oppression in the lives of the Israelites. Moses wanted to know what power was invested in him to demand of Pharaoh to let the Israelites go. When God said "I am that I am", He meant I am the God that was, is and shall be. God was telling Moses that He was the one that existed and the one that must be obeyed. Moses would be approaching Pharaoh to inform him that although he thought he was in control God was in control. "I Am That I Am." This was the name God gave to Moses that would give hope to Israel. Despite how dismal their seemingly orchestrated oppression appeared their hope was in the fact that God existed and He was in control. What does the Sovereign Existence of God mean for us?

The Proclamation Of Hope

Moses asked God whom should he say sent him. God said to tell Pharaoh, "I AM THAT I AM." The proclamation, "I AM." means that God does exist. God does not say *I was* but *I am*. He is the Existing God that was, is and shall be. This statement is the ground floor of the establishment of our hope. The genesis of hope is to know that there is a God; a power beyond power that is present and accounted for. He that rejects the existence of God is a hopeless fool. The psalmist said in **Psalm 14:1:** "The fool hath said in his heart, *there is* no God."[2] We cannot see God but we must place our hope in His existence. **Hebrews 11:1** declares, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."[3] If we are to obtain hope we must believe that God exist. **Hebrews 11:6** reads, "But without faith *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."[4] God gave hope to Israel and provided an opportunity for Pharaoh to obtain hope. The Sovereign Existence of God gives hope to the oppressed as well as the oppressor. Hope liberates the oppressed from the apathy of their circumstances and liberates the oppressor from the consequences of their circumstances. In our text, this proclamation of hope came through an unexpected burning bush. God shows up in unexpected ways to get our attention and prove His existence. God's existence becomes a reality, in some instances, when we are not expecting Him. Moses was busy tending to his father in laws sheep when the Angel of the Lord un-expectantly appeared in a burning bush. Moses encountered the existence of God. Moses experienced a theophany. Theophany is derived

[2]Ps 14:1 (KJV)

[3]Heb 11:1.

[4]Heb11:6.

from two Greek words meaning "God" and "to show." A theophany is a manifestation of God in the Old Testament. In Hebrew scripture, whenever God makes an appearance in the life of Israel it means something big is about to happen and God is proving His existence and control, In Genesis 32 God showed up to Jacob in human form. In Isaiah 6 Isaiah saw God in a vision. Moses witnessed God's glory of God in Exodus 33. When God shows up with a proclamation of hope life takes on new meaning.

The Power Of Hope

I AM THAT I AM was a direct message to Pharaoh that speaks of God's ruling power. It is a statement of sovereignty. The Sovereignty of God means that God is in control of the universe and He can do as he pleased. Not only does this statement tell the oppressor that God exists but in the context of this passage it means that God must be obeyed. This statement places God in the place of rule and control and gives the believer hope. Hope places the power of God on display. The power of hope gives is nurtured by God's past sovereign acts. He creates cosmos out of chaos. He calls worlds into existence. He fights out battles. He sets bushes on fire that don't burn. He takes common folk and makes them uncommon. He opens up Red Seas. He takes the heat out of fires. There is power in hope that places the Sovereign Existence of God on display and brings chaos under His control.

The People Of Hope

The "I AM THAT I AM" proclamation empowered Moses and gave him hope to preach a message of destruction to the oppressor and a message of deliverance to a people that were hopeless. Moses preached to Pharaoh a message from God that warned him of the consequences of oppressing His people but he also preached a message of

hope to a hopeless people that God is in control of their suffering. God would ultimately deliver them from the cruelty of systemic evil that orchestrated their oppression. Moses gave the people a future expectation. When people have hope in the Sovereign Existence of God they will ever look around the corner of their trying circumstances expecting God to intervene. People of hope do not deny their reality but they cling to their expectations that God will, in His Sovereignty, prevail over their circumstances. Future expectations of God's intervention can sustain present traumatic realities. People of hope expect God to take control of chaos. They expect God to turn ravaged communities around. They expect God to handle the Pharaohs in their lives. They expect God to provide bread in a starving land, water in dry places and shelter in the time of storm. They expect God to make a way out of no way. That's a prophetic word for us today. As the people of God we have hope that God exist and that He is in control of our lives.

The Plan Of Hope

God uses ordinary people to solve unordinary problem. Moses was a part of His plan. God manifested Himself in bush and told Moses to tell Pharaoh to let His people go. If God is sovereign and in complete control why did He not deal with Pharaoh Himself or just set the Israelites free? God wanted Moses to be a part of His plan. We must never forget that this is not our story but this is God's story and God has planned what role each of us should play. We are but actors on the stage of life. The plan of God is to use His people to bring about His purpose and His purpose is to provide hope to people who are hopeless. God showed Moses a problem and then gave him a solution. Moses was the solution for the problem that God revealed unto him. Just as God used Moses then His plan is to use us today. Yes, we are in a community that's not too far removed from the

Israelites in our text. There is orchestrated oppression from government, a plan to kill off young black men, overcrowded penal institutions which are a new form of slavery, suppression; oppression and depression have inundated our community.

(The Sovereign Existence of God says, "I exist and I have a plan. I am in complete control of the plan and because I am in control there is hope for you because you are a part of my plan.).

The good news is God has heard the cries of His people in Auburn Gresham and He has come down and from pulpits across this world He tells us to be the solution to hopelessness in this community. We must tell this community that "I AM THAT I AM" is alive and well and no matter how bad conditions may appear He is in control.

He showed us that He was in control on Calvary. There was a problem and He became the solution. The cries of His people came up to heaven because of the oppression of sin and Satan. God saw the problem and made Himself the solution. He wrapped Himself in humanity. The old preacher would say, "He caught the nine month train from heaven." He showed up in a Bethlehem stable and that was the first time man looked down at heaven. He grew up and revealed to us His Sovereign Existence. In John chapter 8 He encountered some Jews that didn't believe He was God in flesh and because they walked in darkness Jesus said, "I am the light of the world."[5] That was one of seven "I Am" statements that Jesus made in the Gospel of John. The Jews called him a devil and proclaimed that Abraham was dead. Jesus said, "Before Abraham was, I AM."[6] Jesus proclaimed the same identity as God did in Numbers 3:14. Jesus was saying that He was indeed God and He was in control of how life would play out.

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[5]Jn 8:12.

[6]Jn 8:58.

Jesus carried out the plan of God. The plan was to die for a lost world that they may live again. He died on Calvary's cross, was buried in a borrowed tomb but early Sunday morning He rose from the grave. God was in control because it was God that allowed Jesus to die for our sins. It was a part of His plan. It was a part of God's plan to resurrect Jesus from the grave. The resurrection of Christ teaches us that we may be down right now but because we have hope in God we know He will take control of the deadness in our lives and resurrect us to new life. Jesus is the "I AM". So no matter what Pharaohs may arise in our life Jesus is our hope of the Sovereign Existence of God. Jesus has power to control the Pharaohs in our lives. God is real. There is an old hymn of the church that says:

"There are some things I may not know,
there are some places I cannot go;
but I am sure of this one thing,
that God is real for I can feel Him deep within."[7]

[7]Kenneth Morris, *My God Is Real*, 1958.

OUR HOPE IS BUILT

SERMON 2: THE LOVE OF GOD – GOD LOVES US

ROMANS 5:8

One may ask the question, "Why is there all of this talk about hope in the community on Sunday mornings?" It is because the community where we worship needs hope. Wherever there is a lack of equal opportunity, i.e., employment, health care, education it diminishes the quality of life which is evident by the 47% crime rate in Auburn Gresham. Acts of kindness that we show the community demonstrates that we understand the love of God and are willing to demonstrate that love to people through acts of kindness. When people in the community are in need they need to know that the church cares and that gives them hope. God wants us to show the Auburn Gresham community the same kind of love that He has shown us. God has demonstrated His love for everyone but most people know nothing about it. The love of God gives hope in several ways. God displays His Love to us without reservation. God's love remains no matter the circumstances. God's love makes sacrifices.

This morning, I want us to turn to a New Testament passage that teaches us about the Love of God and take these principles and apply them to our lives and the community in which we worship every Sunday.

Romans chapter 5 is considered one of the most difficult chapters, theologically, to interpret due to its multi-theological terms. The doctrines of peace, hope, patience, love and grace are all present in chapter 5. However, I believe that Romans 5:8 is perhaps one of the most pivotal verses in the Book of Romans as it relates to hope and

understanding the Love of God. This verse offers hope to the hopeless solely on the basis of God's Love.

We have hope because of the Sovereign Existence of God. God is real and He is in control of the universe. However, the existence of God and His sovereignty alone does not assure us that He will intervene in the hopelessness we experience life's continuum. It is the Love of God that causes Him to respond to our hopeless conditions.

I want look at one verse that has been called "The Gospel in Miniature" for it sums up the Christian hope in God's Love. *Romans 5:8* reads: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."[8] This verse characterizes the Love of God in three ways: 1) The Love of God makes a public display. 2) The Love of God remains no matter the circumstance. 3) The Love of God makes a sacrifice.

The Love Of God Makes A Public Display

The text says that God *commendeth* His Love toward. The word *commendeth* means to stand with publicly, to prove, to make a demonstration or the display of something. God's Love for us is not an empty statement that provides no authenticity. God commendeth His love meaning that He has made a display of it. The Gospel writer John affirms God's Love in John 3:16: *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son."*[9] The word that the Apostles Paul and John used to describe God's love is "agape". There are at least 4 kinds of love that derive from Greek origin that I will mention today.

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[8]Rom 5:8.

[9]Jn 3:16.

1. Phileos: Phileos love is brotherly love; expressing the love we have for our fellowman. Its root is found in the city named Philadelphia, which has been called the *City of Brotherly Love*.

2. Storge: Storge love refers to the love between family members.

3. Eros: Eros love is a self-gratifying love that is equated to eroticism.

4. Agape: Agape is a supernatural love that goes beyond natural affection. It is an unconditional love that loves beyond reason. Agape is a love that never stops loving and takes a stand or makes a public display to prove its authenticity. Agape love is the love God has for us.

The Love Of God Remains No Matter The Circumstances

This passage says that God proved his love, "*While we were yet still sinners*". While we were yet sinners, gives us the amazing assurance of just how strong agape love is. God loved us before we, by our standards, were presentable, acceptable, or lovable. He loved us in our not yet forgiven and sinful nature. Whenever there is uncertainty about God's Love we must understand that the Love of God remains despite the sinful decisions we have made throughout our life. God's Love for us has always been present. It has been present before we ever heard of Him. It has been present before we ever thought of Him. It has been present before we ever realized right or wrong. The key to understanding this verse is realizing that God loves the sinner. This may rattle some people because we find it difficult to love people that have committed great offenses to humanity. However, it is the very nature of God to love His creation. That is to say, He loves the murderer. He loves the rapist. He loves the prostitute. He loves the blunt smoker. He loves the Hennessy drinker. He loves the homosexual. He loves gambler. He loves the adulterer. He loves the pedophile. He loves the gossiper. He even loves the liar. He despises sin but He loves the sinner no matter what sin they have committed. There is

nothing you can do to make God stop loving you. God hates sin but He loves the sinner no matter what the circumstances may be. That should give someone hope today. You probably have said to yourself, "If I can get my life together or maybe when the circumstances are better in my life God will help me." This verse teaches us that circumstances may never be right in our eyes but in God's eyes He loves us despite our circumstances.

The Love Of God Sacrifices

The passage closes by saying, *"Christ died for us."* In other words, he stood in our place and took our punishment. Jesus Christ took our place. In a book called "Broken Chains" by Doug Bachelor he tells a story about two Filipino brothers who were identical twins who drove taxis for a living. They were twins but they had two different lives. One was married with children; the other was single. One day the married brother accidentally struck and killed a tourist in his taxi. He was accused of reckless driving and sentenced to 20 years in the notorious Manila prison. It left his wife and children with no income. One day his twin came to visit him in prison and said, "Your family needs you. Put on my clothes and take my visitors pass and I will put on your clothes and serve the rest of your sentence." While the guards were not looking that changed clothes and the married twin went home to be with his family. That twin that was freed never stop thinking about the sacrifice his brother made for him.

You may not have been accused of reckless driving but we all of have been accused of reckless living. We have told some lie if not many lies, we have hurt some people, and when we should have been sentenced to die Jesus died for us! You ought to

never stop thinking about what Christ has done for us! He really took off His clothes of holiness and put on our sinful, filthy rags and to our sentence for us. He Died!

Why preach this? There are many people within this community that do not know what real love looks like because they don't know Jesus Christ. People have a distorted view of God. They do not know that God is Love. When people have a distorted view of God they embrace a deceptive value system as a guide and the things that don't matter do matter and they things that don't matter do!!!!

How Does The Love Of God Give Us Hope?

When we see God for who He is we understand the Love of God gives us hope and hope gives us self-worth. When a person fails to see their self-worth to God they slash the premium on their life. There are a lot of people that live in our communities that don't think much of themselves because they are God's creation and not His children. (Story of the African Prince…)

How Do You Show Those Who Are Hopeless The Love Of God?

1. **Showing God's Love Through Acts Of Kindness:** Showing kindness to someone else means you care for more than just yourself. People with no self- worth can be selfish! The evidence of our salvation is determined by how we treat other people. **1 John 4:20-21** – "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also."[10] No greater love than this that a man lay down his life for His friend.

One of the first songs I learned as a child was "Yes Jesus Loves Me".

[10] 1 Jn 4:20.

Oh How I Love Jesus Because He First Loved ME!

John 15:9-14 - As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and *that* your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.

OUR HOPE IS BUILT

SERMON 3: THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD – GOD IS WORKING FOR OUR GOOD

It can be quite difficult to grasp the concept of a loving God when life seems to be working against you. When the murder rate is up where you live, you can't get a job, your house keeps getting burglarized, health is poor and health care is impossible and schools are being closed it appears as though life is working against you. Why would a loving God allow such despair in the lives of people He loves? The Word of God assures us that there is hope for us even when the bad things in life appear to be working against us God is working for our good.

Today I want us to consider that our hope is built on the Providence of God. James Madison Pendleton said in his book, *Christian Doctrines*, "What is commonly called Providence, the providence of God, is suggested by creation, and may be inferred from it. For it is natural to suppose that God takes care of that which he was pleased to bring into existence."[11] The providence of God means that God takes care and upholds His creation. When we understand God's Providence we will understand these things: 1. There are no surprises in our life for God. He already knows the outcome. 2. God involves Himself with the details of our lives. He slips His hands into the glove of humanity and works with delicate precision. 3. God guides us towards a victorious intended end despite the trials we encounter on the way.

Our text for today is **Romans 8:28** and it reads, *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to*

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[11]James Madison Pendleton, *Christian Doctrines*, A Compendium of Theology (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1878, 1976), 128.

his purpose."[12] Paul writes chapter 8 to give the Christian assurance of their hope in God. This one verse has been the favorite scripture of many believers because it confirms God's providential care to uphold us no matter the circumstances. Let's look at it. Paul says, "We know that all things work together." The word together is the Greek word "sunergeo" where we get the word synergy from. When Paul says all things work together we have hope that the good, bad and the ugly circumstances in our life are operating together in network for our good. All things not only operate but they cooperate. They work together; they have an understanding how the outcome is supposed to look. It does not mean that everything that happens is good but it means that God will work it for our good. Yet there is a clause in the contract. The text makes this promise mutually exclusive to those who love God and are called according to His purpose. When we love God and rise up to His plans and not try to bring Him down to ours everything will work out for the good.

Why preach this sermon? There are people in this community with no hope because all they see is the crime and poverty that surround them every day. They see drugs being sold, gang activity, crooked police officers, greedy politicians. They see all of the bad and cannot see the good working for them. Yes, people are hungry in the community and that is bad. Children don't have an incentive for education and that is bad. However, through God's providential care He sent the members of Mount Hermon that have caught the vision that God has given the pastor to give away over 288 boxes of food, 125 bags of school supplies last Thursday to the community. It is bad that people don't know about the love of God but it is good that we had a Vacation Bible School last week with upward 70 members learning how to share their faith with other people. Here

[12]Rom 8:28.

it is! God has providentially placed Mount Hermon here to bring hope to a community that is hopeless. We are not perfect but we are a part of the plan of God. We don't have much but we are a part of the plan of God. We didn't just choose on our own to be members of this church. It was in God's plan. The Providence of God is not fate, luck or chance it simply means:

There Are No Surprises For God

The Providence of God means that He already knows the outcome of our lives. He knows what we will do before we do it. He knows what we will say before we say it. Providence means, "God sees before". In other words, before we open our mouth to express a need God already knows it. "A 67 year old man, known only as "PH," has become the first documented case of someone who hears people speak before seeing their lips move. He describes it as experiencing life as though he were watching a badly dubbed sci-fi flick. The dubbing effect began as PH was recovering from a recent surgery. So pronounced is the anomaly that PH even hears his own voice before he senses his own lips moving.

According to New Scientist Magazine: "Light and sound travel at different speeds, so when someone speaks, visual and auditory inputs arrive at our eyes and ears at different times. The signals are then processed at different rates in the brain. Despite this, we perceive the events as happening simultaneously." Somehow, in PH's case, his sight and hearing have gotten out of sync. Researchers are looking for a way to slow down PH's hearing so that it once again matches his sight.

Application: The mind of God processes the words of our hearts long before they ever leave our lips. And when our will is "in sync" with His, He stands ready to respond before our concerns are ever uttered. "I will answer them before they even call to me.

While they are still talking about their needs, I will go ahead and answer their prayers!" (Isaiah 65:24, NLT). Note: The Pulpit Commentary observes: God is always "more ready to hear than we to pray."[13]

God Gets Involved

The Providence of God means He involves Himself with the details of our lives. There are several different philosophies in which men have viewed God's involvement with humanity. There are those that espouse to deism. Deism is a hands off policy. The deist believe that God created the world and stood back to let it unwind like a spinning top on its own. The pantheist makes God non-personable. Pantheisms suggest that God is everything and everything is God, i.e. a tree is God, a pulpit etc. but the Christian believes in the Providence of God. Put simply, He does not leave us to hopelessly fend for ourselves but He gets involved. He sends people and circumstances that we often think just happened when the truth is God slipped His hands into the glove of humanity and worked with delicate precision to bring about good. God involves Himself in our lives. .

God Guides

The Providence of God means He guides us towards a victorious intended end despite the trials we encounter on the way. We often get disenchanted when life does not unfold the way we expect it. However, the Providence of God sees further down the road then we can. He sees the dangers ahead and blocks roads that we want to be accessible. We later discover that it was all for our good.

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[13]Illustration Exchange http://us-mg205.mail.yahoo.com/neo/launch? .partner=sbc&. rand=5pn3cvlnh1ud2

Since there are no surprises for God and He gets involved and guides us we must not resist where He wants us to go and what He wants us to do. Paul said that all things work together for good to those who love God and are the called according to His purpose. Here is the question. What should you take away from this message today?

Love God And Do The Work Of The Church

God has a purpose for Mount Hermon and if we love Him and are called we will acquiesce to His will. God's purpose it to use Mount Hermon to be a part of His providential care for this community. He wants Mount Hermon to bring hope to the hopeless through the work we do. It is easy to say, "I love you God" but the evidence comes to life when you do the work He has left for you. Now let's be clear. God wants us to do the work of the church which differs from church work. Cooking in the kitchen and making a cake for the Church Anniversary is church work but it is not the work of the church. The work of the church is to bring hope to a dying world by telling the lost about Jesus Christ as found in **Matthew 28:19-20 – "**Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen."[14] We have to do what Jesus did if we are to do the work of the church. We must care for the poor and give them the good news of salvation. We must show the community through our involvement that there is hope in God and that God has sent us to make a difference through His Providential care.

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[14]Mt 28:19-20.

Jesus did the work as He declared in **John 9:4 -** "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."[15] The life of Jesus was evident of the Providence of God. He saw before the foundation of the world that man would need a savior. He got involved in the life of humanity and came down Himself, put on human flesh and dwelt among us. The scene on Calvary was God's Providence working at its best. God allowed His only Son to die because He knew from the foundations of creation that we would need someone to pay for our sins. Jesus died but He rose from the grave and that gives us hope today to face whatever comes our way.

Bill and Gloria Gaither wrote:

"God sent His son, they called Him Jesus
He came to love, heal and forgive
He lived and died to buy my pardon
An empty grave is there to prove my Savior lives

And because He lives I can face tomorrow
Because He lives all fear is gone
Because I know He holds the future
And life is worth the living just because He lives"[16]

[15]Jn 9:4.

[16]Bill Gaither, Gloria Gaither, Alceu Damico Lyrics, *Because He Lives* @ Warner/Chappell Music, Inc. 1974.

OUR HOPE IS BUILT

SERMON 4: THE PROMISES OF GOD – GOD KEEPS HIS WORD

2 CORINTHIANS 1:20

In the 2011 Chicago mayoral campaign, Rahm Emanuel promised the city of Chicago that if he was elected mayor there would be safer streets and safer schools. Unfortunately, poor communities have been the victims of a trail of broken promises. This week I read in the Chicago Tribune startling statistics for Auburn Gresham. According to the crime reports from June 20 – July 20, 2013 there were 86 reports of violent crimes; 10% up from last year. There were 171 reports of property crimes.[17] Those stats are from a 30-day period in this community.

If I were to poll this room today and ask, "Does Mayor Emanuel keep his promises?" there would be a resounding, "No. He has not delivered!" He has proven himself to be unreliable. On the other hand, if I were to ask you, "Does God keep His promises" what would your response be? You cannot have hope in a God that lies. The question today is, "Does God keep His promises and is He reliable?"

Today I want us to look at one verse in **2 Corinthians 1:20**. It reads: "For all the promises of God in him *are* yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." This one verse captures the essence of how we have hope in a God that keeps His promises.

In this chapter Paul gave his testimony to the church at Corinth how God helped him in times of afflictions. He also writes this letter in defense of his character relating to a promise he made to the church at Corinth. Paul told the church at Corinth that he would visit them on the way to Macedonia and then on the way back. However, he changed his

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[17]Auburn-Gresham Community Fact, http://crimetribune.com/chicago/community/auburn-gresham.

itinerary because he learned of some negative behavior that arose amongst certain members in the church at Corinth. Paul knew that if he came to Corinth he would be forced to exercise apostolic authority and correct and chastise those members. He was not afraid to correct them. The problem was that the wayward members were the friends and family members of good church members. Paul knew that if he corrected the wayward members at that time it would be too severe for the church and cause some bad feelings.

Brothers and sisters, it still remains true today that often people we love and care for in church fight forward progress. We find it difficult to detach ourselves from them even though they exhibit delinquent behavior. Therefore, in the best interest of the church, Paul decided to delay his trip until the right time to address those who caused divisions. He did not want to come and give chastisement but he wanted to preserve their joy.

This change of travel plans gave an occasion for the trouble makers to stir up further contention. They began to accuse Paul of breaking his promises. Their claim was Paul was no consistent with his promises and therefore they could not trust him to be consistent with the Word of God. Although Paul defends himself in this letter to the church of Corinth he is more concerned about defending the reliability of God's Word. Paul tells the church that God is faithful in His promises even if they thought he was not faithful in his promises. These are Paul's words in verse 20: "*For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.*" [18] Verse 20 teaches us about the Promises of God in three aspects; the revelation, the reliability and reflection.

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[18] 2 Cor 1:20.

Revelation Of Gods Promises

"For all of the promises of God in Him" - The revelation of God's promises are that they are fulfilled "in him" meaning Christ Jesus. Every promise made from God from the beginning of time was manifested in Jesus Christ. The Old Testament promises point directly towards Jesus Christ. The promises of God pertain to a Savior that would save a lost world after the fall of Adam and Eve in the garden. The revelation that sets God's promises apart is that they are not in him who is fallible, finite and frail but are manifested in Him that is faithful, trustworthy and reliable. God would not deposit His faithful promises in us although they are for us. We are prone to mess up. We make promises that we do not keep. We will make a promise and break it without a thought but Jesus is God's promise come to fruition. Our hope is built on the revelation of God's promises in that He promised a savior that would deliver us from eternal damnation. In a stable in Bethlehem with the stench of manure in the air and sheep bleating a woman named Mary gave birth to the son of God and they called Him Immanuel meaning, "God with us." That was the first time that man looked down on the revelation of God's promises. This revelation gave hope to a people that were hopeless that God would stand by His word.

Reliability

"Are yea, and in Him Amen" - "Yea" signifies that Jesus is the yes to all of God's promises. It means that what God has promised He has delivered. God is reliable and Jesus is the evident of His reliability. God's promises are in the affirmative and they will certainly be fulfilled. God cannot by His own nature abandon what He says. If He speaks a word it shall come to past in His own time. "Amen" means, "so be it" and it binds God

to an oath that he cannot break. Amen means it is true, faithful and certain. In **Revelation 3:14** Jesus Christ is referred to as the Amen of God. Amen means, "it's already done" and Christ is the fulfillment of the reliable promise of God. At the end of a prayer amen function as a promise that it will be done. God gets the job done. He does what He says he will do. Isaiah said, *"The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever."* [19]

He is reliable in His omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence. He is reliable because He has the resources to get things done. You cannot be reliable if you do not have the resources to come through.

"In 1994 a 67 year old carpenter man named Russell Herman died in Marion, Illinois. In his last will and testament he bequeathed the following:

- $2.4 billion to the town of Cave-in-Rock
- $2.4 billion to the city of East St. Louis
- $1.5 billion for projects in Southeastern Illinois.

And in a final act of unprecedented generosity, he left $6 billion to the Federal Reserve to pay off the national debt (it would take more today, it's over 14 trillion). There was only one problem; at the time of his death, the only thing Mr. Herman actually owned was a 1983 Olds Toronado. Russell Herman may not have left anything behind of monetary value, but he did leave us all with a good reminder; you can't give away what you don't possess. He had none of the resources to make his will a reality but this is not so with God." He is reliable because He has the resources to bring what He has promised to pass.

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[19]Is 40:8.

Reflection

"Unto the Glory of God by us" – The hope of God's promises will be revealed through us and we will bring God glory. The glory of God means that which makes God impressionable and that which exalts His presence, power and His possessions. When you believe the promises of God you become a beneficiary of God's promises. It will reflect the life you live by and cause others to say, "Wow! Look at God!" In other words, others should be able and look at you and be impressed by God. The life you live should be a reflection of the hope you have in God's promises. When you are a beneficiary of God's promises and he has blessed you you have a responsibility to pass it on. .

I once heard a story of a man that almost lost hope in the desert. He got lost and couldn't find his way. He became thirsty and almost passed out when he saw a little shack in the distance. He went inside and discovered a water pump with a small jug of water with a note attached. The note said, "Pour all the water in the jug into the top of the pump to prime it and upon those conditions you will have all the water you need. I promise." The man had to make a choice whether to drink what was in the jug or believe the promise. He finally trusted the promise and poured all of the water in the well. He poured the entire jug in the water pump and began to pump and nothing happened. He got scared but he kept going and water started to gush out. It was so much water he drank until he got full; he took a shower and washed his clothes. Because he believed the promise he received everything he needed. Now the note said something else: "After you have finished, please refill the jug for the next traveler." The man refilled the jug and added to the note: "Please refill and prime the pump, believe me the promise works."

Why preach this sermon? You cannot say you believe that God keeps His promises and allow people in this community that are spiritually and physically starving

and thirsting to live out their days without telling them, "Prime the pump of God's Word. His promises work! He keeps His word! You can believe God will give you hope when hell is on your back. As you leave here today there is one thing that you should carry away from this message:

Pass On The Promise

When you come to church you come to a water pump where there is water for a thirsty soul but there is a note attached with some conditions. You have to follow the conditions if you want the promises. We often get angry with God because we say that he makes promises that He does not deliver but we fail to meet the conditions of the promises. Here are some of His promises: "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."[20] "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."[21] "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."[22] All of God's promises are true but we don't always meet the conditions. "And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."[23] When you decide to be a disciple a cross comes with it and part of those conditions are you must pass on the promises. It means you have to care for the poor as Jesus did. You must pass on the promises of water to someone else. This community is dying of spiritual thirst but you

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[20]2 Chr 7:14.

[21]*The Holy Bible: King James Version* (Bellingham WA : Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995), Jn 15:7, electronic ed.

[22]Ibid., Ro. 10:9.

[23]Ibid., Lk 14:27.

have the Word of God that has given you life and you must pass it on before the community dies. Here it is! God does not lie and He is reliable in His promises but if we don't know His promises we stand the risk of not claiming the blessings He has for us.

God also has some unconditional promises. Our faith accesses the greatest unconditional promise known. What is it? The tomb was empty! Jesus went to Calvary and died and was buried. God promised that without conditions and He rose without anything we did and guess what? He's coming back again and that's unconditional. How will Jesus find you? Will you be standing on the promises or sitting on the premises.

OUR HOPE IS BUILT

SERMON 5: THE CHALLENGE OF THE CHURCH – THE CHURCH WINS

MATTHEW 16:18

Our Hope is built on the victory of the church. However, it becomes a challenge for the church to keep hope alive when this emerging generation has become morally bankrupt, ethically eroded, and cynical of the church and driven towards personal conquest. Many people in this community have abandoned the church because they view the church as ineffective because crime is on a rise despite a church on almost every corner.

In a real sense, it looks as though the church is defeated. Satan seemingly has taken captive the minds of young Black men and women within Auburn Gresham. Last Sunday, the entire congregation went outside to pray for peace in the community after a young man was gunned down in front of our church. Within 24 hours another young man was killed two blocks away from Mount Hermon. Last week I came out of my office and outside to ask young people not to smoke marijuana in front of the church. There seems to be no hope. I see young men wearing their pants with their underwear exposed. I saw a young woman come to the church two weeks ago dressed the same way. It appears as though Satan has launched an all-out attack on our communities and all of the prayer vigils and marches are a waste of time. There have been several untrue statements about the church that has surfaced and have caused some believers to even doubt its effectiveness. The critical question for us today is, "Is the church defeated?

In Matthew Chapter 16 there surfaced negative communications concerning Jesus that derived from religious critics. The Pharisees and Sadducees began to spread untruths

about Jesus' acclaim as the Promised Messiah. They would corner Him at every chance to push Him to give them a sign proving His Messiah ship but He refused. They wanted to know if Jesus was who He said He was. After all, things were not getting any better for the Jewish community. They were still mistreated by Roman authority and hopelessness was a community concept. The Jews believed that the Messiah would come with power and overtake Roman rule and restore hope to the Jewish people. Jesus came meek and lowly and appeared to be of non-affect towards Jewish life. To add to the chaos, Jesus' own disciples began to buy in to what everyone else was saying about Jesus.

Jesus gathered the disciples when they reached the villages of Caesarea Philippi and asked them, "Who do men say that I am?"[24] They begin vacillating saying, "Some *say that thou art* John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? [25]

Jesus made the question personal to the disciples. He wanted to know what they believed about Him in lieu of what other people were saying. Peter spoke up and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."[26] Jesus assured Peter that his response was revealed to him from God and made this statement: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."[27]

To be clear, Jesus did not build the church upon Peter but the church was built upon the foundational confession of faith that Peter made, "Thou art the Christ, the Son

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[24]Mt 16:15.

[25]Mt 16:14-15.

[26]Mt 16:16.

[27]Mt 16:18.

of the living God.[28] Verse 18 is an affirmation to Peter's confession. However what Jesus says next gives us the assurance of hope in three aspects. Jesus speaks of the church, the captives and the conquest:

The Church

Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church". This is the first time "church" is mentioned in the New Testament. The word for church is "ecclessia" and it means the "called out". The church is not a building but pertains to those who assemble under the banner and belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God. The church is the body of baptized believers that have been called out of the world that looks, behaves and responds different from the world. Baptism was commanded of all believers (Matthew 29:19). It is not a prerequisite to salvation but it is an act of obedience that identifies one with Jesus Christ. As Jesus was buried in the earth the Christian is buried in the water but both prevail in a resurrected state. It is significant that any person that calls him or herself a Christian means that they are Christ-like and therefore they join the movement in which Christ died for. You cannot be a Christian and want nothing to do with the church. The church is the vehicle whereby the Christian finds his or her life purpose and expression in Christ. The church is not perfect but neither are we because it is in a state of being built. Jesus made the statement, "I will build my church." Jesus made this statement before the New Testament church of Acts 2 was born. He did not say upon this rock my church is built but that He would build His church. The church is still under construction. Jesus is edifying the church. The other point that should be made here is that the church is the Body of Christ. What does that mean? When Jesus entered the world in a physical body

[28]Ibid.

He demonstrated love, He cared for the poor and He came to set the captives free. When He died, was buried and resurrected He continued the work through those whom He has redeemed. The redeemed make up the church or the Body of Christ. The Church belongs to Jesus. He specifically says, "It's my church." Pastors do not build churches, deacons and members do not build churches but Jesus builds the church.

The Captives

Jesus makes this declarative statement about the "gates of hell". Gates of hell suggest that there is and will be some opposition for the church. In this context, "hell" means death or the power of death or the state of being dead. The gates of hell are the schemes of the invisible world that represent death. Drugs in the community represent that gates of hell, drive by shootings represent the gates of hell, violent crimes and institutional barriers that foster hopelessness represent that gates of hell. The gates of hell are in opposition to the church. This text suggests that the gates of hell are not designed to attack the church but they are designed to keep the church out. Biblically, gates have been strategically designed to represent authority and power and to protect boundaries and to keep from invasion. Gates are designed to keep people out and to keep people in. The gates of hell are designed to keep the church out and the captives in. The church exists to set the captives free. Satan wants to keep people in captivity and stop the church from rescuing them. Therefore, Satan attempts to keep the church out because the church would bring hope to hopeless people.

The Conquest

Jesus said that the gates of hell shall not prevail. To prevail means to overpower. The church is not in trouble the gates of hell are in danger. Gates have no power over the

church. Jesus made a promise that the church will prevail. There have been many enemies of the church in history but the church is still standing. There is something about the church that keeps us coming back Sunday after Sunday. Why do we stay with the church? We stay with the church because the church will win in the end. .

Why preach this? Our hope is built on the promise that Jesus made that the church will win in the end. Sometimes what we see on the surface does not reveal what's going on in God's program. It's difficult for the church to claim victory when people are being killed in front of the church doors. We must hold on to the faith that God has a plan for the church to save those who have been held captive by the schemes of Satan. He wants to use Mount Hermon to do it! Satan has some people trapped in this community that are prisoners of drugs, crime and poverty that need to get out of his prison. The church has the task of bringing hope to life's hopeless people that are captive to the gates of hell. The critical question is what should the church do when it looks defeated?

Keep Hope Alive

It may sound clichés' but the church has to keep hope alive. It may look like we are losing in the community but you can't trust what you see. Hope means expectation and the church must hold on to the expectation that the church wins. Keeping hope alive means that we keep on praying, keep on preaching and keep on marching. We must be seen moving in the community and not just gathering on Sunday. We must be the light shining in this community. When the community sees the church praying and marching and reaching out it sends notice to Satan that his time is short. It may look like he's winning but God has not had His turn at bat yet.

The story is told of a man who watched a ball game between two teams. As he walked toward the bleachers, he asked one of the players, "What's the score?" The young fellow replied, "We're behind 18 to nothing." "Well," the man said, "I must say you don't look discouraged." "Discouraged," the player said with a puzzled look, "Why should we be discouraged? We haven't had our turn to bat yet." The army of Israel faced a giant, but a young man named David thought, "I haven't had my turn," and he won! The twelve disciples saw 5,000 hungry people and said, "Send the crowds away, so they can buy some food." But Jesus thought, "I haven't had my turn yet!" The angry mob had Pilate seal the tomb where Jesus was buried, but God knew, "I haven't had my turn yet!"

The church is ready to "go to bat" and, like others who have placed their trust in God, we will win! Remember these words of Jesus; "I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."[29]

There is something that keeps me coming back here Sunday after Sunday. I have left here many Sundays feeling defeated but something keeps me coming back. My father died after leaving church almost 36 years ago. The doctors had just released him from the hospital that Friday and he should have stayed home that Sunday but he had to make it to the church one more time. He got up and sung in the evening service, “Get right church and let’s go home. Back, back train and get your load.” My grandfather pastored for close to 70 years and I saw the hurt that came along with being in the church but he kept on coming. Many of you have been in church fights, church splits but something keeps you coming back. Can I tell you what it is? Jesus promised that the church would win in the end. He’s coming back and we don’t want Him to catch us with our work undone.

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[29]Sermon Central

That's why we sing, "I am on the battlefield for my Lord" because we are soldiers in the Army of the Lord and we believe that one day the church militant will become the church triumphant. We believe that one day the wicked shall cease from troubling and the weary shall be at rest. All of the saints from the ages will sit at His feet and be blest.

It looked like the church was defeated on a hill called Calvary. The church had been beaten all night long. The church died on Friday and was buried in a borrowed tomb but three days later the church rose from the grave with all power in His hands. Don't let crucifixion Friday cause you to lose the hope of resurrection Sunday! Jesus is coming back after a victorious church.

APPENDIX B

CONGREGATION SURVEY AND QUESTIONAIRE

Mount Hermon Missionary Baptist Church
Congregation Survey and Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability.

1. Age

   ____ 12 - 18 ____19 - 25 ____26 – 32 ____33 – 39 ____40 – 46

   ____47 – 53 ____54 – 60 ____61 – 67 ____Over 68

2. Gender

   ____Male ____Female

3. Marital Status

   ____ Married ___ Single ___ Divorced ___ Separated ___Widowed

4. Highest grade level completed.

   _____8th grade _____High School _____Associates Degree

   _____Bachelor's Degree _____Master's Degree _____Doctoral Degree

5. Household Income

   ____Under $11,000 ____$12 - 18,000 ____$19 – 25,000

   ____$26 – 30,000 ____$31 – 35,000 ____$36 – 40,000

   ____$41 – 45,000 ____$46 – 50,000 ____$51 – 60,000

   ____$61 – 70,000 ____$71 – 80,000 ____Over $81,000

6. Do you live in the Auburn Gresham community? ___Yes ___No

7. There are some people without hope living in the Auburn-Gresham community.
___Yes ___No

8. There is hope for people living in the Auburn-Gresham community.

___Yes ___No

9. I am willing to volunteer in outreach activities at Mount Hermon?

____30 minutes per week

____1 hour per week

____2 hours per week

____1 day per week

____ 1 day per month

____2 – 5 days per month

____Not at all

Pease read the following statements and rate your response using the following rating scale:

5=Strongly Agree **4**=Agree **3**=No Opinion **2**=Disagree **1**=Strongly Disagree

1.	The church has a responsibility to teach the community about having hope in God.	
2.	The Mount Hermon M.B. Church congregation has the responsibility to help change the mindset of people who are hopeless in the Auburn-Gresham community.	
3.	The men of Mount Hermon should serve as role models for the young men in the Auburn-Gresham community.	
4	The women of Mount Hermon should serve as role models for the young women in the Auburn-Gresham community.	
5.	Christian morals and values should be modeled through the various outreach activities of Mount Hermon.	
6.	The church should be concerned with social justice issues that affect the community (ex. Violent crimes, poverty, drug activity, unemployment and education).	
7.	Mount Hermon should offer tutoring to the youth in the Auburn-Gresham community.	
8.	Mount Hermon should have recreational activities that involve the Auburn-Gresham community (ex. Community prayer vigils, community clean-up week, job seminars, health fairs).	
9.	Sermons by Pastor Moses have positively changed how I view hoplessness.	
10.	Sermons by Pastor Moses have challenged me to help those who are hopeless.	

APPENDIX C

FIELD INTERVIEWS

APPENDIX C

FIELD INTERVIEWS

In the final phase of the methodology the following persons were engaged in a qualitative analysis to determine community perception of the MHMBC congregation. The names of the participants have been replaced with identifiers to protect their confidentiality. The following three questions were asked:

1. How did you feel before the prayer vigil and marches?
2. Have you sensed a change in our churches involvement in the community?
3. How did it make you feel?

BTW One

BTW is an African American female in her mid-fifties. She works for the Chicago Police Department as the liaison to the Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS) Community Policing Unit. BTW has lived in the Auburn Gresham community since 1959. Beverly was asked the three (3) focus questions and her responses are as follows:

1. Before the prayer visual and marches I did not see a lot of involvement and there were a lot of crimes and incidents. Before the visual we did not see many residents coming together. There have been a lot of homicides, burglaries and robberies in that area.

2. Of course I have sensed a change in Mount Hermon's community involvement. The police department under the CAPS program has always tried to invite churches to get involved with the issues in the community. The marches have been a big help for it shows the church partnership with the police department. The residence can see the church's involvement. When I grew up in the community I did not see much involvement from the church but since Pastor Moses has been involved with the community I have seen a great change. We used to have far greater calls for service.

3. I was at the march on that Tuesday and I saw the residence involved and I really felt good about seeing the Pastor and church coming together.

JW Two

The second interview was with an African American male directly who lives in front of the Mount Hermon Missionary Baptist Church. JW Two is a forty-nine-year old bus driver for the Chicago Transit Authority. He has lived in Auburn Gresham for ten years. The following responses are a result of our interview.

1. The church is the best thing we have in this area. I talk with the few neighbors on my block. There are only four homes over here and we all talk. We agree that if it wasn't for that church everybody would have walked away from their homes. Bruh, of course there is some violence every now and then but if it wasn't for your church, bruh we were going to walk away from our homes. Everything goes on around on Eggleston but by the church being there on Normal it has become the foundation and they can't bring that stuff on this side of the block. Again, we were talking about leaving our homes if it wasn't for the church here. I have two other neighbors on the block that said the same thing, 'If it wasn't for that church there, we would leave.

2. Most definitely I have sensed a change. You had the marches and food drives for the homeless or low income people. The church is the neighborhood honestly.

3. It made me feel better. It made me feel that someone cared. The people at the church cared and the people that go to the church that come from outside the community cares.

SC Three

SC Three is an African American female in her late forties who lives one block east of Normal Avenue. Susie is currently unemployed but has lived in Auburn Gresham over thirty years.

1. Before the marches I was shocked at the violence in the community. I recall the killing of the young man across the street from the church last year on Normal. This summer I was backing out of my drive way on my way to the post office when the young man was killed on the bridge on Normal. I heard shots. At first I thought they were fire crackers but then I heard the sirens. I

couldn't believe it was happening again. I spoke with neighbors who said years ago it was not that bad. About thirty days later, I heard the church marching and singing and I knew the march was in response to the violence. Even the young people in the community were talking about joining the march.

2. I sense a good change because I spoke with a young man who lives on the corner who spoke about the marches to me. Everybody in the neighborhood knows what Mount Hermon does in the community. It has had a powerful impact on this community.

3. I felt good. I was like wow! When I heard the marches I said they are coming right down 79th Street, to Vincennes to Normal. I felt very positive. This church is a giving church with the food baskets and all. A lot of people in the neighborhood, even people that don't live in the neighborhood, my cousins, everybody knows about Mount Hermon. Believe it or not Mount Hermon has had a very positive impact.

RS Four

The researcher interviewed RS Four, a thirty-one-year old unemployed African American male on disability. Rico lives on South Normal Street and has been a resident of the Auburn Gresham community for four years.

1. I have been here for four years and the first three years before the marches, I have already seen three people get killed on the bridge right here. After the marches the community came together.

2. It's a good change because more people are coming together.

3. I think that seeing the prayer marches and seeing the church do the things they do is a big help. If you all were not out there people would be like, "no one cares what is going on." As long as you all doing something in the neighborhood with people coming out marching people will be safer coming forth telling about crimes they have seen.

LV Five

The researcher interviewed Lavonda Vaughn, a twenty-four-year old unemployed African American female. Lavonda lives on South Normal.

1. Before the community marches I felt unsafe. I say unsafe because of the simple fact that people getting shot on the bridge. You got kids walking pass, older people walking pass, you got people going to work. It's bad when you can't walk around your own neighborhood.

2. Yes. Yes. Y'all bringing people together to try and stop the violence and helping people who are in need. I feel like as long as y'all keeping doing this we are going to make it.

3. Personally, I feel great because everybody need help in some way and what a better way to start than with the church. It isn't any better where then Jesus Christ is. That's all you need right there. If anything we need more black people like this because black people don't stick together. It's always something.

EG Six

The researcher interviewed EG Six, a thirty-one-year old unemployed African American female. Ebony is unemployed and she on South Normal Street.

1. Before the marches I really felt unsafe but I feel better now.

2. I sense a change because you all have the after school for kids. You all keep the neighborhood up. They don't have that much crime on this side of the community because of the church.

3. I feel that the church has made this block a safe passage.

RB Seven

The researcher interviewed RB Seven, a seventy-two year African American female who has been a resident of Auburn Gresham for fifty-two years. Ruth resides on South Stewart. She is a retired Chicago Public School Teacher.

1. I felt awful. As a matter of fact I have documentation that I could give you for the past several years about the problem in the lagoon area (In front of the church). That's how I felt, awful.

2. I know for a fact that there has been a quality of improvement as it relates to the crime around the lagoon area with the guys that were hanging out. And I know for a fact that Auburn Gresham has improved. I believe that this is the

best summer we have had over here in years. That I know. I have information you can use to show how it was back before you guys started marching. There has absolutely been a change in the churches involvement. When the community does Earth Day we could not do that without Mount Hermon's involvement. That would not be successful in an area of the city where people had no idea existed in the inner city.

3. Beyond going to church, which is another conversation for me you all have been an anchor for this community. I don't think the new homes that were built would have been built for not the presence of the church. Even people that do not go to church there is a sense of respect for the church simply because you guys are there. The way this community is built, it's not a cul-de-sac but it has the aura of a cul-de-sac and the church is like the headstone for lack of a better word. When the tore the hospital down in the 1970's my father who was definitely not a church goer said, "Now they better not tear that church down." I remember those words distinctly and I have been connected to this neighborhood since 1961.

JP Eight

The researcher interviewed JP Eight, a thirty-year African American male who lives on South Throop. He is the Community/Technology Organizer of the Auburn Gresham Development Corporation. Jimmy has lived and worked within the community for three years.

1. I wouldn't say there was hopelessness. There is always hope but the level of our crimes which are violent has increased. It's an interesting circumstance because I see what happens after the impact of violence takes place and what's going on with the people in the area. With regards to Mount Hermon I was in charge of disseminating information where food was being given to the community through the Greater Chicago Food Depository and I always placed Mount Hermon on the top of the list. Different churches have their niche. With St. Sabina violence and helping boys is their thing. Some churches deal with technology for the children. I think the community has felt the impact of Mount Hermon because of food that has been distributed by the church within the community.

2. I see more involvement. I like the work that you guys do with keeping this area clean and that deters a lot of negativity.

3. At the end of the day it's about the church partnering with other anchoring institutions like community development centers, universities or colleges. We tend to separate church and state and that's not the case when community is involved.

It is important for the researcher to address a change in the intended methodology. It was intended by the researcher to interview persons who were non-members of the MHMBC. The researcher's motive was to have a diverse focus group with persons representing various age groups. The last portion of the focus group interviews were intended to include young men that were affiliated with neighborhood street gangs, i.e. Black Gangster Disciples, Black Stone Nation and Face World. The street gangs aforementioned are visible and unofficially boast of many violent acts including homicides in the Auburn Gresham Community.

The researcher met resistance from young men between the ages of fifteen and twenty actively involved in street gang activity. These persons were not cooperative to affect the field interviews. At this point a transition took place in the field studies process. The researcher attempted to reach out to persons within this age group through former members of MHMBC or young men's within the age range that were somehow connected to MHMBC to conduct the interviews. It was through the following contacts that the researcher learned that young men that were apart of Face World gang, a new faction of the Black Gangster Disciples, did not welcome the communal presence of MHMBC. The researcher made the decision to use these contact persons to gain insights of how the interviews may have concluded. The following final interviews are from two young men that have an affiliation in some way with MHMBC.

DM Nine

The researcher interviewed DM Nine, a twenty-year old African American male who is unemployed. He lives on South Stewart Street and various different addresses in

the Auburn Gresham community for most of his life. Don is a former member of MHMBC that attends periodically.

1. In my opinion the killings were real bad because the kids could not be safe and play basketball without the shootings, fighting's and if you went into the wrong area you could get jumped.

2. I feel that the church is doing the right thing. There were not 100% that were with the marches. People see the church trying to stop the violence and a lot of people want to do that and some don't. Face world does not want us to stop the violence because they want to keep jumping on people because that's what they want to do.

3. It made me feel good because it made me feel like I was a part of a family. We were marching around, singing songs, and praying to stop the violence. It made me feel good as though the church cared about what was going on.

KC Ten

KC Ten is a seventeen-year old African American male who is in his senior year at Kenwood Academy in Chicago's Hyde Park community. Keshaun has lived on Normal Street for nine years. Keshaun is an active member at MHMBC serving on the Sound and Media ministry.

1. I was not surprised by the crime. It is by 79th and Vincennes which is a dangerous area. You have the restaurant over there and the liquor store. I think it was a bad neighborhood period. I think there is hope for the community because when I worked with NHS (Neighborhood Housing Services) I would see people interact with the kids.

2. Yes, hugely. I think that the after school programs, and food give-a-way you could see a lot of homeless people and people that needed help coming. I think there are different perspectives of how people view our church. The homeless view our church as helpful; However, the gang side is not pro-church and do not see our church as helping the community.

3. I love to see the church helping because it makes me feel as though I am a part of something. Especially when I am helping too. Like the food give a ways I felt I was helping and I was doing something well.

PCB Eleven

The researcher interviewed PCB Eleven, the Pastor of a church in the Woodlawn Community of Chicago. The church is located on the south side of Chicago in a community that resembles the hopelessness of the Auburn Gresham community where the researcher serves as pastor. PCB Eleven gained national recognition as *The Rooftop Pastor* for spending ninety-four days on the rooftop of an abandoned hotel across the street from his church to combat gun violence. PCB Eleven has eulogized several young people that have succumbed to gun violence. Pastor Brooks did a march across America for *Project Hood* an effort to raise money for a new community center near his South side church to bring awareness to violence to the youth of the City of Chicago.

The researcher was able to glean knowledge from PCB Eleven's model to combat hopelessness within the community.

You have been engaged in a project that

1. *How do you define your ministry of Hope?*

   I believe when you are pastoring in inner city areas or when you are dealing with impoverished people the bulk of your message and ministry has to be centered on giving people hope. Because there is so much hopelessness and frustration and depression if people are constantly looking to the world for answers and solutions they will constantly be disappointed. So for us, at New Beginnings we try to give the people nothing but a message that permeates hope. It translates into how we preach, how we teach, everything is about gaining momentum to build peoples hope.

2. *Do you think your preaching has had an effect on your congregation that has brought them to awareness of hopelessness within the community and if so how do you think they have responded?*

   I think preaching is important but not the most important thing especially when it comes to getting people to have hope. I think that whether you are black, white, rich or poor we all deal with the same core issues. It may be translated differently but we all deal with things like fear. We all deal with things like stress and family. So there are certain issues that are common

towards everybody and to preach a message that addresses those issues are vitally important. I try to make sure that even though the educational system in the city may be less than what some others may have I try to preach in a way that is very simplistic, very biblical and in a very communicative non-traditional way. The reason being is because we are dealing in an age where communication is moving so rapidly that we can't take long monologues and long drawn out thesis and try to explore them. You have got to hit it and quit it.

3. *Explain Project Hood?*

Project Hood is two words that some people deem as negative and put them together. The H.O.O.D stands for *Helping Others Obtain Destiny*. We decided to put together an outreach organization built to reach a vast amount of people outside of our church; specifically non-believers and specifically young black males. It is an outreach organization of our church which is a part of our *Next Steps Project* and the goal ministry of our church. It deals with helping to stop violence one neighborhood at a time. Our central focus thus far has been right here where we are, a one mile radius around our church. There are four components to project hood to stopping violence:

- Educational
- Economics
- Social
- Spiritual

Those are the four areas we focus on with everything that we do. In those areas we target towards making a better neighborhood, which we believe will help stop violence.

4. *How long has the project been underway?*

It's been since November 2011. Its young but the brand has grown tremendously. Our data base has grown and I am excited. I think it will be more powerful when I am not the one leading it. We need a director on board and a fundraiser on board. When we do those things it will go even to another level.

I did a pretest posttest survey with the congregation to determine where they were in determining their responsibility to community and to determine their level of awareness of existing hopelessness within the community. I wanted to see if my preaching had any impact on whether their consciousness was raised to community hopelessness and to determine their willingness to engage with

the community to transform hopelessness. So the question is because there are similar themes in our community *how do you instill hope as a congregation into a hopeless community?*

That's a good question. I think that, one, the preaching of the gospel is important. We cannot deny that but preaching along won't do it. We have to create systems that bring people to a point of hope and we have to remove barriers that bring people to a point of hope and we have to have exposure. I think one of the biggest this is because we are next to an apartment complex called Parkway and a lot of the kids have never been anywhere. So, we started making an effort, even myself, I take kids down town. It is not uncommon for me to take seven or eight kids from Parkway and take them with me for a ride downtown. To hear their conversations; because some of them have never thought about working or living down town. I think you can infuse hope you just have to continue to be creative on how you do that. For so long, we just used preaching and it is vital and important but we have to have some other systems along with it. People sometimes do not know they are hopeless and it affects me in every area even the way the church looks. When they come in I want them to see hope and not the typical church in the hood. I want them to see color; I want them to see niceness. I want them to see excellence. I am picky about details that others may not be picky about but it's because I know that when you walk into somewhere it says a lot and that click. You never know what will get people.

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